



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



TUESDAY – 21 JUL 2020

	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	07/21 Women in Afghan security forces 07/21 UK report: Russia referendum meddling 07/20 Syria: Israel air raids on capital 07/20 Violent protests in Mali escalate 07/20 Thailand large anti-govt. protests 07/20 Japan protests China survey ship 07/20 Egypt approves Libya deployment 07/20 Hong Kong protesters skirt new law 07/20 UK suspends Hong Kong extradition treaty 07/20 Bahamas bans US travelers 07/20 India virus cases continue to surge 07/20 EU sets \$2.1T budget, virus aid deal 07/20 Promising early results Covid vaccine	07/21 California virus surge: what happened? 07/21 Minneapolis PD faces surge of departures 07/20 Retirees confront virus in Florida 07/20 Coronavirus devastating Navajo Nation 07/20 Military medics deployed Calif. hospitals 07/20 Heat wave hampers virus efforts, recovery 07/20 Top health official: having surge right now 07/20 AP: capitalize Black but not white 07/20 Bankruptcies surge amid pandemic 07/20 More federal law enforcement to cities 07/20 FDA cracks down fruity disposable e-cigs 07/20 Thousands strike, protest: racial inequality 07/19 World shock: US response to coronavirus 07/19 Bracing for more child-care conflicts	07/20 DOH: 47,743 cases, 1453 deaths 07/20 UW Medicine virus vaccine: promising 07/20 'Zero chance' virus reversal w/out changes 07/20 Reimagining school year during Covid-19 07/20 DOJ: Seattle ban violated consent decree 07/20 Family of teen killed in CHOP files lawsuit 07/20 SPD body-cam video: violent protest 07/20 Worry: Seattle violence bring in feds 07/20 Workers strike for workplace equity 07/20 Seattle council approves spending tax 07/20 Puyallup braces for virus hit on budget 07/20 Tacoma PD chief announces retirement 07/20 Portland leaders plead for end to violence 07/20 Portland mayor: still head of police bureau 07/20 Police spread water safety awareness
Cyber Awareness Go to articles	07/21 Covid-19 fuels cyberattacks 07/20 Hackers attack Telecom Argentina 07/20 VPNs leaked logs that 'didn't exist' 07/20 Cyberattacks hit Israel water system 07/20 Exposed: 1M online student records 07/20 Decline in insecure network services 07/20 Rise in DDoS attacks lost in pandemic 07/20 Western Australia huge privacy breach 07/20 BadPower attack corrupts fast chargers 07/20 BlackRock: new strain banking malware 07/20 UK 'confident' Russia targeted virus labs 07/20 Sophisticated smishing scheme in Finland 07/20 Fake cryptocurrency apps deliver malware 07/19 European Space Agency site defaced again	07/21 Genealogy software maker exposes data 07/20 Citizen app alerts users: crime, incidents 07/20 Maryland health firm reveals cyberattack 07/20 Gates Foundation impersonated in scam 07/20 Coinbase blocked Twitter hackers \$280K 07/20 ICE questions admin of site 'BlueLeaks' 07/20 Number of reported breaches decrease 07/20 Blackbaud admits paying ransomware 07/20 Emotet-TrickBot malware duo is back 07/20 Cyber against granny 07/18 Rise in sextortion online	
Terror Conditions Go to articles	07/21 Afghanistan release of Taliban prisoners 07/21 New ISIS leader reputation for brutality 07/20 Suicide bomber kills 8 Afghan soldiers 07/20 Indonesia jails leaders AQ-linked group	07/20 US-backed forces renew Syria campaign	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	07/20 Researchers: polar bears face extinction 07/20 Explosion hits power plant in Iran	07/20 'Very rare' illness spreads in Denver 07/20 Workers terrified enforcing mask rules 07/20 What does it mean: 'new drug works'?	07/20 Stories police tell; time to reexamine trust?
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	07/20 US slaps sanctions Chechnya leader 07/20 US blacklists China firms; human rights 07/20 Panama charges man in mass slaying 07/20 Paraguay: smugglers escalate violence 07/20 Mexico: homicides amid pandemic grew	07/20 Violent crime surges in Atlanta 07/20 Surge: threats to federal judges, families 07/20 'Anti-feminist' lawyer as NJ shooter; dead	07/21 Central District shooting; 1 dead, 2 hurt 07/20 King Co. prosecutor on protest arrests

[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)

Event Calendar

[Top of page](#)

Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

HEADLINE	07/20 SPD body-cam video: violent protest
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/police-release-body-cam-footage-seattle-protest/JMZHE3QNCJCKRNZGILMOJFTJHQ/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle police released body camera video of Sunday afternoon's protests when 12 officers were injured.</p> <p>In the video, police said you can see protesters approaching the West Precinct.</p> <p>According to police, officers saw a man walk up to the secured garage doors of the building and hold an umbrella up to intentionally block the view of a security camera.</p> <p>Police then moved in to escort the person away from the doors and were immediately hit with bottles, street cones and fireworks.</p> <p>An officer was struck in the neck and injured by fragmentation from one of the explosions, which led to the officer being hospitalized.</p> <p>During the incident, officers used pepper spray to stop the assault from the crowd. Officers arrested one person for assault and a second for theft of a police bicycle.</p> <p>"We are releasing this video in an attempt to be transparent and will continue to release videos of significant incidents," police said.</p>
Return to Top	Click on link to view body-cam footage: https://spdblotter.seattle.gov/2020/07/19/significant-property-damage-officers-injured-during-protest/

HEADLINE	07/20 Worry: Seattle violence bring in feds
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-protests-concerns/281-bf124505-cf16-4e83-aadd-7165505eda92
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle police, nor prosecutors, could say much more on Monday about a pair of arrests tied to destructive vandalism that happened on Sunday evening.</p> <p>A "well organized" group marched through downtown Seattle to Capitol Hill Sunday afternoon causing significant damage to businesses and the Seattle Police Department's West and East Precincts, according to a Seattle police spokesperson.</p> <p>"It was kind of a joint effort to target specific businesses and government buildings and do property destruction and vandalism," said Seattle police in a press conference Sunday evening.</p> <p>However, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan was quick to suggest that it was not tied to a peaceful protest happening around the same time a few blocks away.</p> <p>"The people causing that destruction clearly came wanting to do that they were dressed to do it. They had the implements to do what they already know. Most people when they go to protest are not, you know, camouflaged head to toe, wearing helmets and goggles and carrying baseball bats or inflammatory devices," Durkan told KING 5.</p> <p>The two arrested were not charged on Monday, and scant details were released. However, Seattle police suggested multiple officers were injured in the attempt to control the crowd, and that multiple buildings were damaged by the rioters.</p> <p>The Downtown Seattle Association wrote, in a statement: "As our neighborhood businesses struggle to recover, it's frustrating to see such widespread and recurring damage to our center city. With our communities trying to rebuild, we need our leaders to ensure our city is safe for everybody. Unfortunately,</p>

Sunday's acts of property destruction and vandalism only serve to undermine the ability of small businesses and our downtown to recover.”

A peaceful demonstration, concerning immigration enforcement, was happening around the same time. Both Durkan and Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold suggested that the destruction will be material for President Donald Trump, who allowed for nameless federal troops to make arrests in Portland over the weekend.

On Monday, the President suggested he would allow the same type of activity in cities like Chicago or New York.

"We've seen that in Portland. What's happening in Portland should worry every American," said Durkan.

Herbold, in a briefing with colleagues, issued a warning of sorts to organizers of protests and cited Portland as an example.

"The Trump Administration could use it as an excuse to do the same to Seattle, so I plead with the public to please continue your demonstrations. We need your voices to propel necessary change in policing, but I plead with you to do so peacefully," Herbold said.

There has been no suggestion of an imminent change, but the activity comes with a cloud of uncertainty over funding for police officers and public safety.

The City Council and Mayor's Office are both publicly debating the merits of significant, immediate cuts and more in 2021.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 UW Medicine virus vaccine: promising
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/uw-medicine-developing-new-coronavirus-vaccine
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - While the pandemic spreads across our country and infection rates continue to climb in Washington State, there is good news in the race to develop a vaccine.</p> <p>Monday, UW Medicine announced promising early results related to a new vaccine under development. A recent report published in a medical journal said the drug has proven initial success in lab mice and primates and is produced in a way that could make mass-producing a vaccine easier than other options.</p> <p>“It was great, it was easy,” said Jennifer Haller, one of the first volunteers in Puget Sound who rolled up their sleeves to help.</p> <p>It was in mid-March when Haller received an experimental COVID-19 vaccine. So far, initial results of Moderna’s vaccine shows promise.</p> <p>Haller told Q13 News today she's doing great and continues volunteering in the trial.</p> <p>It all began King County months ago when some of the very first U.S. COVID-19 victims perished, and a novel coronavirus pandemic was declared. Since then researches have scrambled to learn how to beat it.</p> <p>“The antibody appeared to go up and sustained,” said microbiologist Deborah Fuller.</p> <p>“Being able to manufacture at scale for target populations is going to be key,” said molecular virologist Jesse Erasmus.</p> <p>Chris Pirie with HDT Bio in Seattle said advancements in technology and medicine are making the search for a coronavirus vaccine easier than if the pandemic arrived only a few years ago.</p>

“We would have been relying on, in many ways, antiquated technologies to try and address this,” said Pirie.

UW Medicine has been working with HDT on the latest vaccine. Pirie said Seattle is uniquely positioned to combat coronavirus.

“We have all of the pieces in place,” he said.

Moderna’s vaccine development is still in human trial phases. UW Medicine and HDT’s vaccine could start human trials by this fall.

If all goes well the vaccine could be available for the public by next summer.

Pirie said about half-a-dozen coronavirus vaccines are in development across the country and there are even more being studied around the world.

While Seattle is home to world-class universities, medicine and bio-technology companies, area doctors are learning how the impact for healthcare workers and people everywhere.

“This is what I say is the revolution,” said Fuller. “We’ll always remember pre-covid and post-covid because we’ve accelerated these technologies.”

The National Institute of Health says thousands of volunteers are needed for large scale clinical trials. Anyone seeking to be part of the research can visit this website [here](#).

[Return to
Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Police spread water safety awareness
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-spread-water-safety-awareness-as-washingtonians-flock-to-lakes-and-rivers
GIST	<p>LAKE STEVENS, Wash. - With temperatures warming up, more people are out enjoying Washington’s lakes and rivers. But with the water fun comes the water dangers, and official want to make sure people across our state are staying safe this season.</p> <p>Governor Jay Inslee has declared this week Paddle Safe Week, a way to remind everyone of the best ways to stay safe while out on the water.</p> <p>“Right now paddle sports is booming,” said Officer Dennis Irwin with Lake Stevens Police Department’s Marine Unit. “With stand up paddles and kayaks people don’t understand they’re considered a vessel. They’re required to have a life vest and a whistle on board. If you’re under 13 you have to wear it.”</p> <p>Over the weekend on Lake Stevens, officers from their Marine Unit were out patrolling the lake while reminding people of the laws and safety rules.</p> <p>Officials say before getting out on the water it’s important to know the laws, know your limits, and carry the proper equipment in case of an emergency.</p> <p>Police said they’re also on the lookout for intoxicated boaters.</p> <p>“Be careful with this good weather. Some people want to partake in alcohol,” said Officer Irwin. “BUI is a big deal. We don’t have lane markings so you have to be cognizant of everyone around you and what’s going on.”</p>

	<p>Even with temperatures reaching well into the 80s, the water is colder than you imagine, and sometimes it's colder than your body can handle.</p> <p>"Its all about safety," said Officer Irwin. "I love my job. I don't want to have to do the hard part of my job, which is body recoveries and people being injured. That's something I don't like to do, but if it's something we have to do I'd rather educate people first."</p> <p>For more information on Paddle Safe Week click here.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 UK report: Russia referendum meddling
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/137ea23528542e51f78af254c81f143c
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — A long-awaited report published Tuesday on Russian influence in British politics criticized the British government for its slow response to Russian interference in the 2016 Brexit referendum, with its authors saying it was “astonishing” that no one sought to protect that democratic process.</p> <p>The report’s authors accused the British government of “actively avoiding” looking into evidence of the Russian threat in the EU referendum. “Serious questions needed to be asked,” the authors said.</p> <p>While the report from the parliament’s Intelligence and Security Committee said it would be “difficult — if not impossible — to prove” allegations that Russia sought to influence the referendum, it was clear that the government “was slow to recognize the existence of the threat” even after evidence emerged of Russian interference in the U.S. elections and the Scottish independence referendum in 2014.</p> <p>“As a result, the government did not take action to protect the U.K.’s process in 2016,” the report said.</p> <p>The report says Russia sees Britain as one of its top intelligence targets in the West. It said Russian influence in the U.K. is the “new normal,” and successive governments have welcomed Russian oligarchs with open arms. Russians with “very close links” to President Vladimir Putin were “well integrated into the U.K. business, political and social scene — in ‘Londongrad’ in particular,” it said.</p> <p>Speaking before the report was released, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that Russia “never interfered in electoral processes in any country in the world.”</p> <p>“Not in the United States, not in Britain, not in any other country. We don’t do that ourselves and we don’t tolerate when other countries try to interfere with our political affairs,” Peskov said.</p> <p>The report’s authors said they were subjected to an unprecedented delay in making the document public, with officials holding off its release for more than six months. Critics claimed that was meant to shield Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Conservative Party from embarrassment.</p> <p>The report was originally submitted to Johnson on Oct. 17. The government initially said it couldn’t be published until it was reviewed for national security issues, which postponed its release until after the Dec. 12 general election. Further holdups were caused by delays in appointing new members to the Intelligence and Security Committee.</p> <p>Finally, Johnson named five Conservative lawmakers to the nine-person panel in hopes his handpicked candidate would be chosen as chairman and block the report. The gambit failed when a renegade Conservative was chosen to head the committee with backing from opposition parties.</p> <p>The opposition Labour Party has accused the government of failing to publish the report because it would lead to further questions about links between Russia and the pro-Brexit campaign in the 2016 referendum on European Union membership, which Johnson helped lead.</p>

	<p>Another parliamentary panel — the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee — previously published the results of its own inquiry into disinformation and “fake news,” which called on election regulators and law enforcement to investigate reports that a British businessman with links to Russia donated 8.4 million pounds (\$10.6 million) to the Brexit campaign. The National Crime Agency said in September that it found no evidence of criminal offenses related to the donation.</p> <p>The intelligence committee report covers the full range of the Russian threat to the U.K., including election interference, espionage and targeted assassinations such as the attempt to kill former spy Sergei Skripal in the English city of Salisbury two years ago, said Dominic Grieve, who chaired the panel until he left the House of Commons after the election.</p> <p>The government’s explanations for delaying the report “are simply not credible,” Grieve said in an interview with Britain’s Channel 4 News.</p> <p>The report’s release comes only days after Britain, the United States and Canada accused hackers linked to Russian intelligence agencies of trying to steal information from researchers working on a potential coronavirus vaccine.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 Minneapolis PD faces surge of departures
SOURCE	https://dnyuz.com/2020/07/21/minneapolis-police-experience-surge-of-departures-in-aftermath-of-george-floyd-protests/
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS — Nearly two months after four of its officers were charged with killing George Floyd, the Minneapolis Police Department is reeling, with police officers leaving the job in large numbers, crime surging and politicians planning a top-to-bottom overhaul of the force.</p> <p>Veteran officers say that morale within the department is lower than they have ever experienced. Some officers are scaling back their policing efforts, concerned that any contentious interactions on the street could land them in trouble. And many others are calling it quits altogether.</p> <p>“It’s almost like a nuclear bomb hit the city, and the people who didn’t perish are standing around,” Officer Rich Walker Sr., a 16-year Minneapolis police veteran and union official, said of the mood within the department. “I’m still surprised that we’ve got cops showing up to work, to be honest.”</p> <p>Many American police departments have faced challenges in retention and recruitment in recent years amid growing criticism of police abuses. But the woes in Minneapolis and elsewhere have only grown since May, when Mr. Floyd was killed after the police detained him.</p> <p>Nearly 200 officers have applied to leave the Minneapolis Police Department because of what they describe as post-traumatic stress, said Ronald F. Meuser Jr., a lawyer representing the officers. The prospect that a department of about 850 could lose about 20 percent of its force in the coming months has prompted major concern.</p> <p>Already, about 65 officers have left the department this year, surpassing the typical attrition rate of 45 a year, Chief Medaria Arradondo told the City Council during a meeting last week. Dozens of other officers have taken temporary leave since Mr. Floyd’s death, complicating the staffing picture.</p> <p>Cmdr. Scott Gerlicher, head of the Special Operations and Intelligence Division, wrote in an email to supervisors this month that, “Due to significant staffing losses of late,” the department was “looking at all options” for responding to calls, including shift, schedule and organizational changes.</p> <p>The email, a copy of which was obtained by The New York Times, also said the department would not “be going back to business as usual.” The guiding principle going forward, Commander Gerlicher wrote,</p>

would be to “do no harm,” and he highlighted potential reforms, including, “Looking for reasonable and safe alternatives to police services in some areas.”

“Front line supervisors play the most critical role in making meaningful changes,” he wrote. “Don’t take this lightly.”

With fewer officers to patrol, some of those on the streets find themselves stretched thin and working longer hours. Complaints about the lack of support from politicians, community members and even department commanders are part of the daily conversation in precincts and squad cars.

For years, police departments nationwide have faced a work force crisis, according to a report published last year by the Police Executive Research Forum. In a survey of more than 400 departments nationwide, the forum found that 63 percent of them saw a slight or significant decrease in the number of applicants over the previous five years, 41 percent had growing staff shortages and nearly half reported that officer tenures were decreasing.

The current climate differs from six years ago — when the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., sparked national unrest — in that the demands are not just to reform police departments, but to get rid of them, said Chuck Wexler, the executive director of the forum.

Many activists see an overdue reckoning for an institution that they say has long gotten away with brutalizing people of color with impunity.

“Policing as an institution has largely been untouchable, despite the many, many, many failings that are cultural,” said Jeremiah Ellison, a Minneapolis City Council member who supports defunding the police. “Here we are in a moment where people all over the country are saying, ‘No, no, no, no, no, we are interested in real accountability.’”

Instead of embracing change, Mr. Ellison added, the police are saying, “You’re picking on us, you don’t know how hard our job is and we’re going home.”

Several officers in Minneapolis said they felt like they all were being stereotyped because of Derek Chauvin, the white former officer who knelt on Mr. Floyd’s neck for more than eight minutes before Mr. Floyd died.

“If anything has the propensity to have a violent interaction, we already know we’re judged before they even hear the facts,” said Officer Walker, whose stop of a motorist 11 years ago led to a lawsuit that the city settled for \$235,000 after several responding officers punched and kicked the driver.

To Sasha Cotton, the director of the Office of Violence Prevention in Minneapolis, there is a cruel irony to officers saying they feel stereotyped. Her office regularly works with Black men and boys to try to keep them out of violence.

“Our officers are experiencing what so often our young men and boys, who we service through the program, say they feel,” she said. “They feel like they are being judged based on the behavior of some of their peers.”

Minneapolis officers say that much of their frustration is rooted in an uncertainty over what comes next. A majority of City Council members have pledged to defund the Police Department, and they are currently in the process of trying to replace the agency with a new public safety department.

Many officers say they feel like city leaders and some residents have turned their backs on them, making them less inclined to go “above and beyond what they need to do,” said Officer Walker, the union official.

“Cops have not been to the work level of before, but it’s not a slowdown,” he added. “They’re just not being as proactive because they know they’re not supported in case something bad happens.”

Officers said they were also concerned about their job security.

Sgt. Anna Hedberg, a 14-year Minneapolis police veteran and board member of the Minneapolis Police Federation, the union representing officers, said a colleague recently told her he had another job opportunity. He has been on the force for six years, but it takes 10 years to be fully vested in his pension, so he was unsure whether he should leave.

“I told him to leave because he’s not happy,” Sergeant Hedberg said.

The tensions between the city and its Police Department come as crime is on the rise. There have been 16 homicides since June 1, more than twice as many as during the same period last year. Violent crime is up by 20 percent compared with the same stretch a year ago. Experts say there are many reasons for the spike, not just police staffing levels.

Alondra Cano, a City Council member who supports defunding the police, said that any change to the department would take time and that officers would not lose their jobs overnight. It would be better for everyone — officers included — if they worked together toward a transition, she said.

“I would prefer that people don’t resort to those extreme decisions of quitting or collecting a paycheck but not responding to calls,” she said.

For one senior officer on leave because of PTSD symptoms, the problems started when he could not sleep after long nights of work during the unrest following Mr. Floyd’s death. Eventually he got headaches, he said, and lost his appetite and desire to do anything.

“We were stepchildren. We were abandoned,” said the officer, who asked that his name be withheld because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

He saw a therapist, who told him he should take time off. He is torn about whether he will return.

“I’m coming back to chaos,” he said. “I’m coming back to no leadership. I’m coming back to an administration that doesn’t care about the officers. I’m coming back to a City Council that doesn’t want us here. I’m coming back to a family, or a community, that doesn’t want me here. Why do I want to come back to that?”

Many officers are on edge in part because they believe that Chief Arradondo and other senior department leaders have not provided clear direction to the rank and file, Sergeant Hedberg said.

“They’re waking up the next day: ‘Is it going to be the day I get transferred? Is it the day my unit’s going to be dissolved?’” she said. “People are concerned about it.”

John Elder, a spokesman for the department, said in an email: “We have not heard those complaints; in fact I have received compliments from staff about the support from the front office.”

While many officers express anxiety about the future, Officer Charles Adams III said he supported the efforts of Chief Arradondo, the first Black officer to lead the force.

Although Officer Adams has felt unsupported by the community and demoralized at times — especially after he was removed from his job as a school resource officer when the school district ended its contract with the Police Department — he said thoughts of leaving the force never crossed his mind.

“Now is not the time for us to run away,” said Officer Adams, a 19-year veteran and native of the city’s predominantly Black North Side.

	“I’m a Black face. I can be out there,” he added. “I wear blue, but let’s talk: ‘What do you want to see done? How can I help you?’ I think it’s my opportunity to give people what they’ve been asking for.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 AP: capitalize Black but not white
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/7e36c00c5af0436abc09e051261fff1f
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — After changing its usage rules last month to capitalize the word “Black” when used in the context of race and culture, The Associated Press on Monday said it would not do the same for “white.”</p> <p>The AP said white people in general have much less shared history and culture, and don’t have the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color.</p> <p>Protests following the death of George Floyd, which led to discussions of policing and Confederate symbols, also prompted many news organizations to examine their own practices and staffing. The Associated Press, whose Stylebook is widely influential in the industry, announced June 19 it would make Black uppercase.</p> <p>In some ways, the decision over “white” has been more ticklish. The National Association of Black Journalists and some Black scholars have said white should be capitalized, too.</p> <p>“We agree that white people’s skin color plays into systemic inequalities and injustices, and we want our journalism to robustly explore these problems,” John Daniszewski, the AP’s vice president for standards, said in a memo to staff Monday. “But capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs.”</p> <p>Columbia Journalism Review, the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, the Los Angeles Times, NBC News and Chicago Tribune are among the organizations that have recently said they would capitalize Black but have not done so for white.</p> <p>“White doesn’t represent a shared culture and history in the way Black does,” The New York Times said on July 5 in explaining its decision.</p> <p>CNN, Fox News and The San Diego Union-Tribune said they will give white the uppercase, noting it was consistent with Black, Asian, Latino and other ethnic groups. Fox cited NABJ’s advice.</p> <p>CBS News said it would capitalize white, although not when referring to white supremacists, white nationalists or white privilege.</p> <p>Some proponents believe that keeping white lowercase is actually anti-Black, saying it perpetuates the idea that whites are the default race.</p> <p>“Whiteness remains invisible, and as is the case with all power structures, its invisibility does crucial work to maintain its power,” wrote Eve Ewing, a sociologist of race and education at the University of Chicago who said she’s changed her mind on the issue over the past two years.</p> <p>“In maintaining the pretense of its invisibility, whiteness maintains the pretense of its inevitability, and its innocence,” she wrote on the website Nora.</p> <p>Kwame Anthony Appiah, a philosophy professor at New York University, wrote in the Atlantic that capitalizing white would take power away from racists, since their similar use “would no longer be a provocative defiance of the norm.”</p> <p>The AP checked with a variety of experts and sources in making its decision.</p>

	“We will closely watch how usage and thought evolves, and will periodically review our decision,” Daniszewski said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Violent protests in Mali escalate
SOURCE	https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Malians-have-been-protesting-for-weeks-Here-s-15419794.php
GIST	<p>Political protests in Mali escalated last week after government security forces arrested several leaders of the M5-RFP group, a coalition of religious, civil society and opposition leaders. Security forces shot live rounds at protesters, killing several and stoking angry crowds. A government crackdown led to at least 11 protesters killed.</p> <p>Nearly 30 years and three democratically elected presidents after Mali's 1991 transition from military rule, protesters have once again taken to the streets demanding real change. Here's what you need to know.</p> <p>Protests began June 5, with more demonstrators and more violent government crackdown each week. The M5-RFP (Mouvement du 5 Juin - Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques) formed in June after a standoff over elections. M5 holds Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (known as "IBK") accountable for failed governance and demands his resignation.</p> <p>Following the arrests of opposition leaders, protesters ransacked the National Assembly. Government security forces responded with tear gas and gunfire. On July 11, protesters barricaded streets around the home of Mahmoud Dicko - an M5 spokesman and an imam at the Salam mosque in Badalabougou in Mali's capital city, Bamako. Protesters wanted to ensure that he, too, was not arrested.</p> <p>Imam Dicko and other religious leaders have a history of mobilizing Malians to the streets and to the polls. In 2013, Dicko's support helped secure IBK's election as president.</p> <p>Rising inequality is a problem in Mali, and many people see political leaders, and government employees in general, living large. The education system, which should be a path to opportunity, is virtually nonfunctional. Strikes close schools, while the threat of violence has left over 2 million Malian children without schools.</p> <p>Many Malians have no work, even in the informal sector. Since the coup in 2012 the country's thriving tourist industry has collapsed. Despite French military intervention, local extremist groups affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State have brought violence to large swaths of Northern and Central Mali. In March a perpetual runner-up in presidential elections named Soumaila Cisse was kidnapped and is still being held, presumably by Katiba Macina, a violent extremist group.</p> <p>In 2019, more Malians than ever were displaced by insecurity. Households in Bamako and throughout the south face the dual burdens of extra mouths to feed and more competition for employment. The health crisis associated with the coronavirus pandemic has added to the pressure on the government to address all these problems.</p> <p>The M5 group demands IBK resign, and the dissolution of the National Assembly as well as the Constitutional Court, which they have criticized for overturning provisional 2020 legislative election results in order to install the president's preferred candidates.</p> <p>M5 accuses IBK of inept governance and corruption. The group called out IBK's son Karim Keita, a National Assembly deputy, for his lavish lifestyle. Many considered Karim Keita ill-equipped to lead the Legislature's National Defense Commission while Mali faced spreading violent extremism.</p>

M5 also demanded an independent investigation of arbitrary arrests and deaths associated with the protests, and denounced FORSAT, the country's counterterrorism units, for illegally infiltrating Mali's security forces and violently repressing demonstrators.

In response, IBK removed Constitutional Court judges and his son resigned his position, but not his legislative seat.

The regional economic body ECOWAS sent a delegation to Mali and proposed a reconfiguration of the constitutional court and a unified national government that includes the opposition. M5 has rejected the proposals and declared IBK's resignation to be its "red line."

A government of national unity risks repeating history. The "consensus government" of Keita's predecessor, Amadou Toumani Toure, undermined the opposition without addressing the needs of Malians. Analysts suggest a negotiated deal that leads to just another set of politicians who have access to state resources for their own personal gain won't solve the ongoing crises and will leave much of the population unsatisfied.

The Malian state has always had tenuous legitimacy and minimal effective control across Mali. For decades, Tuareg insurgents have called for an independent state of Azawad, or at the very least political and economic integration in Mali. Violent extremist organizations have been active in Mali for decades.

Violence in central Mali has been fueled in part by Amadou Koufa - the leader of the Macina Liberation Front or Katiba Macina - who revived the image of the 19th century Fulani empire to help recruit Fulani youth. Koufa later joined with Iyad Ag Ghali's Ansar Dine and others under the JNIM (Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin). Amnesty International has reported extrajudicial killings of Fulani at the hands of Malian security forces. Most recently there have been widespread killings in Dogon villages in Central Mali, prompting concerns that the government's failure to protect citizens could lead to a humanitarian disaster.

Mali is known for predominantly peaceful coexistence among an extraordinarily diverse population, but the promise of democracy seems to have failed. Since 1991, Mali has benefited from millions of aid dollars to support building the rule of law, including donor funds to promote free and fair elections, civic education and to revitalize the justice system.

Since the mid-1990s, global anti-terrorism campaigns have funded and trained the Malian military. In 2012, France launched Operation Serval to fight violent extremists. Operation Barkhane followed to fight terrorism across the Sahel. Add to the mix the G5 Sahel, a regional security force and MINUSMA, a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

Foreign aid has not secured democracy nor halted the violence in Mali - extremist groups continue to disrupt life and the government crackdown on protesters has become increasingly violent. By taking to the streets, Malians are letting the world know that they would like to participate in the building of their own futures.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Portland mayor: still head of police bureau
SOURCE	https://www.opb.org/news/article/portland-mayor-ted-wheeler-says-hes-keeping-police-bureau/
GIST	<p>Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler has rejected Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty's call to give her control of the city's police bureau.</p> <p>Over the weekend, Hardesty called on the mayor to give up the bureau, saying Wheeler was denying violence committed by local police and did not appear to have control of the force.</p>

The mayor was silent on the issue for two days. But on Monday afternoon, in a press release mainly focused on actions mayors across the county were taking to block federal officers from entering their cities, Wheeler included this:

“I will continue to serve as Police Commissioner through this time of transformation,” he wrote.

Under Portland’s unique commission form of government, city council members are responsible for the day-to-day oversight of city bureaus. The mayor hands out those assignments and Portland mayors have historically — though not always — kept the police for themselves.

Commissioner Hardesty’s office has not yet responded to the mayor’s announcement. The office of Commissioner Chloe Eudaly declined to comment on the decision. Commissioner Amanda Fritz stood behind him.

“Per the Charter, the Mayor is in charge of Bureau assignments. I support his decisions in that regard,” she wrote. “He is joining with Mayors across the country calling for an end to federal interference in response to demonstrations. He is uniquely qualified to continue coordinating and leading our City at this critical time.”

The mayor has criticized the behavior of federal law enforcement in Portland and demanded they leave, but he’s also repeatedly said he has no authority to control the action of federal officers, who have jurisdiction across the United States. On Monday, he said he had asked the City Attorney to “explore other legal options to address federal actions.”

Wheeler also joined mayors from Kansas City, Washington D.C., Chicago, Atlanta, and Seattle Monday in a letter addressed to leaders in Congress, objecting to federal officers entering their cities.

“Their threats and actions have escalated events, and increased the risk of violence against both civil and local law enforcement officers,” the letter read. “We urge you to immediately investigate the president’s and his administration’s actions.”

The letter honed in on the deployment of federal forces to Portland, which the mayors said occurred over the objections of local and state officials and had escalated tensions.

“None of these agents are trained in modern urban community policing, such as de-escalation,” the letter read. “They are operating without coordination with local law enforcement, and their actions have escalated events.”

The letter also stated that federal officers appear not to be complying with a federal court order regarding the use of tear gas and other crowd control tools. The mayor’s office said that portion of the letter refers to the order by U.S. District Judge Marco Hernandez, which restricted the use of tear gas for local police as part of a lawsuit filed by Don’t Shoot PDX.

But, Jesse Merrithew, an attorney representing Don’t Shoot PDX, said the federal officers are not defendants in that lawsuit — and it would only be applicable to them if they were working in concert with the Portland Police.

Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell has said, while the two agencies do work in close proximity to one another, they each “have their objectives” and get their directions from different leaders.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 07/20 DOH: 47,743 cases, 1453 deaths

SOURCE <https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article244361437.html>

GIST	<p>The Washington State Department of Health on Monday reported 797 new COVID-19 cases and six deaths.</p> <p>Pierce County reported 60 new cases Monday and one new death. Pierce County had a total of 103 deaths likely caused by COVID-19 as of Monday, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.</p> <p>Statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are at 47,743 cases and 1,453 deaths, up from 46,946 cases and 1,447 deaths Sunday.</p> <p>Thirty-seven people with confirmed COVID-19 cases were admitted to Washington state hospitals on Wednesday, July 12, the most recent date with complete data. March 23 saw 89 people admitted, the highest number to date during the pandemic.</p> <p>Washington state has conducted 826,354 coronavirus tests. On July 12, the most recent date for which data is complete, 5,019 specimens were collected statewide, with 6.2% testing positive. That compares with 9,394 specimens and a 4.1% positive rate on June 12; 4,960 specimens and a 5.1% positive rate on May 12; and 1,386 specimens and a 6.4% positive rate on April 12.</p> <p>The test numbers reflect only polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, which are given to patients while the virus is presumably still active in the body.</p> <p>King County continues to have the highest numbers in Washington, with 13,319 cases and 636 deaths. Yakima County has the second-highest numbers, with 9,185 cases and 195 deaths.</p> <p>All counties in Washington are reporting cases. Five of them have case counts of less than 10.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Tacoma PD chief announces retirement
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article244364862.html
GIST	<p>Tacoma Police Chief Don Ramsdell on Monday announced that he will retire in January 2021.</p> <p>Ramsdell, who is the longest-serving chief in department history with 18 years at the helm, said he has been discussing his retirement plans with City Manager Elizabeth Pauli for a while.</p> <p>“I want to make sure the city has time to conduct a thorough search for my successor, and I want to make sure we provide for a smooth transition in leadership,” he said.</p> <p>Ramsdell’s announcement comes at a time when local activists and an attorney representing Manuel Ellis’ family have called for him to step down amid accusations of bungling the investigation into Ellis’ death.</p> <p>Ellis died March 3 while being restrained by four officers, who remain on administrative leave while the Washington State Patrol starts a new investigation into the incident.</p> <p>Details about how the city’s search for a new police chief will be conducted weren’t immediately available.</p> <p>“I want to assure our community that we intend to conduct a thorough search and will invite robust public input as part of that process,” Pauli said in a statement. “Above all, we will be looking for leadership competencies that will support our goal of transformational policing for our city.”</p> <p>Mayor Victoria Woodards thanked Ramsdell for his service and said the department’s next leader will build on the work he did with Project PEACE (Partnering for Equity and Community Engagement), which launched in 2015 to address public safety concerns and build a better relationship between residents and law enforcement.</p>

The chief's retirement will not delay body cameras for officers, several policy changes involving [banning chokeholds](#) and requiring officers to intervene if a fellow officer uses excessive force or supporting a community trauma response team, according to the city.

Ramsdell joined the department in 1985 as a patrol officer and became chief in 2003.

[Return to
Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Puyallup braces for virus hit on budget
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/puyallup-herald/ph-news/article244234157.html
GIST	<p>The coronavirus pandemic will hit all government budgets this year, but for those more dependent on sales tax revenue — such as Puyallup — the pain will be more severe.</p> <p>Half of Puyallup's general fund comes from a tax on sales at car dealerships, the South Hill Mall, other retail and professional services, Finance Director Barbara Lopez said. She expects a quarter of estimated sales tax revenues to disappear.</p> <p>In total, Lopez is preparing for a \$7 million reduction in revenue this year. The general fund is \$56.2 million.</p> <p>The Finance Director hopes this is a “worst-case scenario,” created by estimating a smaller return than expected in every month since the beginning of the pandemic.</p> <p>Other than sales tax, Puyallup is bracing for the impact of other financial losses, like the cancellation of the Washington State Fair, which means \$865,000 in revenue for Puyallup. There has also been a drop in gambling, permits and recreation programs, meaning less tax revenue.</p> <p>Puyallup has taken measures to account for the financial impact of COVID-19. Fifteen city employees have been furloughed, and the city has delayed new equipment for IT and vehicle replacement, saving \$2.9 million.</p> <p>Street projects originally scheduled for this year have been delayed, including the Safe School program to improve walkways to schools.</p> <p>Lopez said the city will have to dip into reserves, but expects that less than \$500,000 will be withdrawn.</p> <p>“If ever there is a good time and reason to responsibly use reserves, it is now during a pandemic,” she said.</p> <p>Puyallup council members have a target reserve balance between 8% and 15% of revenues. The end of the year is estimated to be 9.7 percent of revenues.</p> <p>CAR DEALERSHIPS</p> <p>The River Road car dealerships are a “big chunk” of the city's sales tax revenue, Lopez said. Of the sales tax revenue, car sales account for 28%.</p> <p>For every car purchased, the city collects 3.4%.</p> <p>John Hall, President of the Korum Automotive Group, said when car dealers were shut down by the stay-at-home orders from Gov. Jay Inslee, services and parts sales paid the bills.</p>

	<p>Compared to last year, Hall's dealerships have brought the city \$300,000 less in sales tax from March to May, but a strong January and February meant the city has only seen \$200,000 less than the first half of last year.</p> <p>Hall believes that those sales will be entirely recovered, but some who still need to buy a car will push their purchase down a few months.</p> <p>"Anytime you have buyers who need to buy, and there is an event like snowmageddon in 2019, people couldn't buy because they had to stay home, but they bought cars in March," he said.</p> <p>"If they have a need to buy a car, they are still going to buy."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Seattle council approves spending tax
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-city-council-approves-big-business-tax-spending-from-emergency-reserves/
GIST	<p>The City Council voted unanimously Monday to authorize spending \$86 million from Seattle's emergency reserves to provide additional relief to residents and small businesses struggling to deal with the public health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>It also unanimously approved a resolution laying out a detailed plan for more than \$200 million per year in expected proceeds from a new tax on big businesses, allocating the lion's share to affordable housing projects.</p> <p>The COVID-19 relief bill and the spending plan for the big-business tax are linked, because the spending plan calls for the first \$86 million raised by the tax next year to be used to replenish the emergency reserves.</p> <p>The council took the steps over objections lodged by Mayor Jenny Durkan, who described them as fiscally, legally and economically risky.</p> <p>Council members, including sponsor Teresa Mosqueda, celebrated the actions as essential to help Seattle's most vulnerable households survive the pandemic and to build a more resilient tax system for the city in the years ahead, with large companies paying a greater share for public services.</p> <p>"It is our obligation to provide immediate relief right now," Mosqueda said, arguing the emergency reserves were built up for a time like the present and making the case that pumping money into working households and small businesses will help Seattle's economy recover better than cuts.</p> <p>The Durkan administration asked the council Monday to resist sapping the emergency reserves for COVID-19 relief, at least until August, when more will be known about the city's economic trajectory and about additional Congressional assistance. Seattle is dealing with a massive budget hole this year and can expect to encounter an equally large gap next year, due to the downturn and money already spent on COVID-19 relief, Senior Deputy Mayor Mike Fong and Budget Director Ben Noble wrote in an email.</p> <p>"We may need to enter into another stay-home order this year, which could have further devastating impacts," Fong and Noble wrote.</p> <p>Monday's votes wrapped up months of talks about how best to raise money from large corporations and years of advocacy on the issue. The council voted 7-2 to pass the tax earlier this month, along with a high-level spending plan.</p> <p>Dubbed JumpStart Seattle by Mosqueda, the measure will apply a tax rate of 0.7% to 2.4% on compensation paid by large companies to employees who make at least \$150,000 per year.</p>

The tax will apply to businesses with annual payrolls of at least \$7 million, with exemptions for supermarkets, government entities and some health care nonprofits. It targets businesses with many high-paying jobs, like Amazon; the top tax rate is for companies with at least \$1 billion in annual payroll.

Monday's COVID-19 relief bill appropriates \$67 million from the city's emergency fund and \$19 million from the city's revenue-stabilization fund (nicknamed the rainy day fund) this year for the following purposes:

- \$32.6 million for rent assistance and homeless shelters
- \$18.1 million for grocery vouchers for immigrants and refugees
- \$14.5 million for small business assistance
- \$13.5 million for grocery vouchers for others
- \$3.6 million for child care assistance
- \$2.3 million for affordable housing providers
- \$1.1 million for mortgage counseling and foreclosure prevention

Durkan separately has proposed using \$29 million in emergency funds to help plug the city's 2020 budget hole. The council is still reviewing the mayor's budget rebalancing package but is likely to approve that strategy.

The emergency and rainy day funds today hold a combined \$128 million. Taking \$86 million for COVID-19 relief and \$29 million for budget rebalancing will leave the former with \$0 and the latter with \$13 million.

Mosqueda described that amount Monday as responsible, considering the JumpStart tax will be used to replenish the funds.

Bottom of Form

"Now is not the time" to spend so much from the emergency and rainy day funds, "when there seems to be so much rain in our future," Fong and Noble countered, also asserting a lawsuit could block the JumpStart tax before 2021 and leave the city without that source to replenish the emergency funds. The council vetted the tax with "the same attorneys the mayor relies on," Mosqueda replied.

The debate may not be over. Mosqueda made a point to note Monday that the council "can only appropriate dollars — we cannot force the mayor to spend."

The JumpStart tax is expected to raise at least \$214 million annually and Monday's resolution describes how the council intends to spend the money.

In 2021, the council's priorities will be:

- \$86 million to replenish the emergency reserves
- Remainder:
 - 75% to preserve city services, support low-income, immigrant and homeless residents
 - 20% for COVID-19 relief
 - 5% for administration

In 2022 and beyond, the council's priorities will be:

- 62% for low-income housing, housing designed to combat displacement in neighborhoods like the Central District and affordable homeownership
- 15% for small business assistance and worker training
- 9% for Green New Deal programs
- 9% for community-led development projects
- 5% for administration

Mosqueda said the tax would over time address Seattle's long-running homelessness crisis and combat gentrification, while Councilmember Kshama Sawant credited activists with pressuring the City Hall to pass a tax by collecting signatures for a potential "Tax Amazon" ballot measure.

	<p>The Washington State Public Disclosure Commission ruled Friday that the Tax Amazon campaign should have registered as a ballot-measure committee by Jan. 27, instead of on March 19. The commission issued a warning.</p> <p>Councilmember Dan Strauss narrowly won support for an amendment Monday that will allow businesses with 25 or fewer full-time-equivalent jobs to qualify for COVID-19 assistance, up from 10 full-time equivalent jobs.</p> <p>Durkan said last Friday she would allow the JumpStart tax to become law without her signature, objecting to the measure while acknowledging the council could override a veto. She said she worries the tax may encourage large companies to move workers away from Seattle, arguing the policy would work better at the county or state level.</p> <p>Council President M. Lorena González pushed back against that reasoning in a letter and in remarks Monday. In a letter to Durkan, González wrote she would refuse to “be held hostage” by businesses threatening to leave the city.</p> <p>“We are choosing bold action as opposed to kicking the can down the road in hopes that some other elected body will show up to rescue us,” she said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Workers strike for workplace equity
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-workers-strike-monday-for-black-lives-workplace-equity/
GIST	<p>Organized Workers for Labor Solidarity (OWL) held a rally in front of King County Executive Dow Constantine’s Downtown Seattle office Monday afternoon in solidarity with the national ‘Strike for Black Lives.’</p> <p>The Seattle-based group of rank-and-file labor activists hoped to draw attention to longstanding racial inequities, such as, according to an OWL member and King County Metro mechanic, disproportionate disciplinary action toward workers of color hired by King County.</p> <p>“I hope Dow Constantine pays attention that there’s racism at Metro and at other departments in King County,” said mechanic Adam Arriaga. “I want employees of King County to have the confidence to speak up and tell their story without fear of retribution.”</p> <p>Arriaga joined OWL after a June incident at King County Metro’s South Base Complex in Tukwila, where a Black figurine was placed at the base of a flagpole with its chords dangling near the figurine’s head in what appeared to resemble a noose. As a 12-year employee of the county, Arriaga said that he’d regularly experienced or witnessed microaggressions and overt racism in his workplace.</p> <p>His experiences were echoed by others who took the microphone during the rally, including Whole Foods workers.</p> <p>Meat cutter Charles Thompson said that he’s been protesting outside of his work at the South Lake Union Whole Foods since management told him that he couldn’t wear a Black Lives Matter mask last month. When management compared wearing the mask to sporting a Trump hat, he said, “My skin color is not political.” Ever since, Thompson said that his managers have called him into the office every day for minor offenses, and that he’s sometimes followed around his store by the company’s security guards during his breaks.</p> <p>“I hope we can get more people to notice our movement,” he said during the rally.</p>

	<p>Thompson went on strike from work Monday to join workers throughout the county who called for racial equity through healthy worksites, an end to nepotism and favoritism in hiring, as well as stopping harassment and racist threats at the workplace.</p> <p>Members of some unions in Seattle took breaks at noon for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the amount of time a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee against George Floyd's neck in May, killing him, and activating protests against police brutality worldwide.</p> <p>"Because of our contracts as healthcare workers, we are not able to strike, so our members are doing unity breaks and walkouts to mark the day," said Amy Clark, communications director of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW.</p> <p>Monday's rally coincided with Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County's virtual day of action in solidarity with local and national unions. Participants in the virtual action were called to send emails to elected officials on subjects such as ending the sweeps of homeless encampments and ending the school to prison pipeline, at designated times throughout the day.</p> <p>At the rally's conclusion, the group of workers gathered around a white banner that read, "Root out racism at King County & Beyond!" With upraised fists, the workers chanted in unison: "No justice, no peace."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Reimagining school year during Covid-19
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2020/07/reimagining-washingtons-school-year-during-coronavirus
GIST	<p>No matter how often Maribel Vilchez cleans her classroom, she doesn't feel it's enough. She teaches in a small portable. The windows hardly open. There's next to no ventilation. Before the coronavirus, there was mold.</p> <p>Now, with the possibility of returning to the classroom for in-person teaching, Vilchez can't help the anxiety she feels when she thinks of seeing her third grade students in their seats again. In such a small room, she's not sure how safe she can make the space for herself and for the children.</p> <p>"How much time am I going to spend cleaning and how much time am I going to spend teaching?" she said. "Did I sign up to become a doctor?"</p> <p>Like many teachers, Vilchez has felt like more than an educator in recent weeks. All these new responsibilities, much more than her usual teaching would require, have kept her busy since the pandemic hit Washington in the spring. She's started tracking recent health data, keeping herself up to date on coronavirus news. She has also caught up quickly on efforts to connect kids with meals and technology because at her North Thurston District school, Lydia Hawk Elementary, 70% of students qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches.</p> <p>Vilchez said many teachers like herself, fueled by all these concerns, have taken up this extra work: "It's just hard for us to say no."</p> <p>More than anything, she wants to see her students in person again. That's where her teaching is most effective. But she doesn't know when, or even how, that will be possible.</p> <p>The final weeks of the previous academic year coincided with pandemic tumult. Now, many Americans are wondering what's next for schools. President Donald Trump is pushing for nationwide school reopenings, while families and educators express a variety of concerns.</p> <p>Most school districts have yet to announce specific plans for the next school year, but some have promised more concrete ideas in August. On June 11, the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction released guidelines for schools that give an idea of what those plans could look like: Schools could opt to</p>

continue virtually or create a hybrid plan of in-person and distance learning. If schools are in-person, they'll likely have to add safety procedures, like regularly screening students for the coronavirus and requiring face masks.

There's no blanket mandate for what districts should do this fall. But in general, state schools Superintendent Chris Reykdal has prioritized serving as many students as possible face to face, while following health guidelines.

Cindy Rockholt, assistant state superintendent of educator growth and development, said a special emphasis is being placed on bringing students who've faced more difficulties with distance learning back first. But with September still weeks away, she said it's hard to tell what will happen.

"Right now, because we haven't moved to where we can get rid of the social distancing expectations, we think that there will be some restrictions on most districts in how they're able to serve students," she said.

This tension — a desire to teach students in person versus fears of the coronavirus — has plagued teachers and administrators throughout Washington. Larry Delaney, president of the statewide Washington Education Association teachers union, said some educators he's spoken to don't see in-person school as an imminent possibility.

"The trend is heading in the wrong direction, and there's no way to dispute that," Delaney said. "It just doesn't compute how we can return to normal schooling, or something that more closely resembles normal schooling, this fall."

Both Delaney, who has been a high school math teacher in Snohomish County for 27 years, and Vilchez, the teacher from North Thurston, contributed to OSPI's June guidance. But the path of the pandemic in Washington has changed a lot since then. Delaney said the Washington on which they were basing those guidance decisions weeks ago is not the Washington of today.

"I think the feeling has shifted," he said. "Six weeks ago, the trend was that [COVID-19] cases were on the way down, but in the last six weeks, we've seen a serious spike in the number of cases."

Superintendent Michelle Reid led her Northshore School District to be one of the first in the country to suspend in-person schooling last March. While she said the district's ultimate goal is to reopen as soon as possible, she's skeptical of it happening quickly.

"The community transmission data of this virus is really an important consideration, and right now it feels like, given that the governor has paused reopening plans until July 28, that the data is going in the wrong direction," she said. "The data would not indicate that opening school at this time would make a lot of sense."

While Reid said no district plans for the school year will be made public until August, she sees some inconsistencies that need addressing in coming weeks as the district creates its plan. One example is the governor's guidance of state public meetings law, which prevents large groups from gathering to hamper spread of the coronavirus and requires that school boards meet remotely.

"There is a certain irony in a requirement for boards to meet remotely while they're set to approve plans for in-person instruction," Reid said.

Educators, at least, has had more time to plan since last spring, where trial and error was the norm for many teachers. Sarah Applegate, a teacher-librarian in Wenatchee, said she and others have learned more about making remote learning more effective. It's especially important now, as Applegate assumes schools may begin to return to normal student academic expectations, including grades and testing. At the end of the past academic year, many schools went easier on students, making it harder for their grades to worsen.

“This next year is going to be different,” she said. “We’re going to have some different levels of expectations, I think — but I don’t know.”

Nasue Nishida, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession in Olympia, said her organization has helped educators navigate online teaching these past few months. That will be the organization’s focus for the foreseeable future, she added. Whatever happens, Nishida thinks it’s unlikely Washington schools will pull back on online learning any time soon.

“Even in a hybrid model, you’re going to have kids doing distance learning at home for a couple days a week,” she said. “At the end of August, I don’t know where we’ll actually be with [reopening]. There’s a lot of energy invested into that and it may or may not happen.”

Delaney hopes districts will put the same effort into developing a potential hybrid learning plan as they will toward continued distance learning plans, since both are a possibility.

“I think that if we are being honest with ourselves as educators, we need to look at the very likely possibility now that we’re going to have to be opening... with some sort of a distanced learning model,” he said.

Kathe Taylor, assistant superintendent of learning and teaching with OSPI, said experience from the past few months has helped planning for schools become more sophisticated. By now, many school districts also have a better sense of which students have struggled the most since schools shut down, such as those with difficulty accessing technology. Knowledge like that is valuable, and makes for more informed future plans.

“We hope not to be in that situation again, where schools are closed and we’re having to deliver online learning or deliver packet-based learning,” she said. “But if we are, it’ll be from a much different vantage point.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Coronavirus devastating Navajo Nation
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/4ayq3p/coronavirus-is-devastating-the-navajo-nation
GIST	<p>NAVAJO NATION – Michael Begay, who owns and operates the only funeral home on the western part of Navajo Nation, usually processes about 270 bodies a year. But by the time coronavirus had exploded across the U.S. in June, he’d already surpassed that.</p> <p>He’s had to hire more staff and even acquire a freezer trailer to fit all the bodies of local people lost to the virus.</p> <p>“We run out [of caskets] every week, basically,” said Begay, who owns and operates Valley Ridge Mortuary in Tuba City. “In fact, I [have] to send staff down to Phoenix to collect more caskets. We get our order biweekly and we run out every week.”</p> <p>The Navajo reservation, about the size of West Virginia, has had one of the highest per-capita rates of COVID infection in the U.S. As of July 19, Navajo Nation tallied 8,593 cases and 422 deaths — that’s more confirmed cases than 10 states and more deaths than 16. About 30% to 40% of residents in the reservation don’t have running water, which makes following basic CDC guidelines, such as handwashing, almost impossible. On top of that, there are only 12 healthcare centers and 13 grocery stores for the 173,000 people who live on the reservation.</p> <p>“I just kind of anticipated this was going to happen,” Begay told VICE News.</p> <p>The virus isn’t just fueling one of the worst outbreaks in the country on the reservation, which includes parts of New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona. It’s exposing the underlying systemic inequities that have</p>

existed there for decades at the hands of the U.S. government. Navajo Nation has consistently been left out of key federal infrastructure legislation and has historically been exploited for natural resources, like uranium. Today, Navajos can't even count on the most basic infrastructure, like paved roads and water. And during a pandemic, those are proving to be matters of life and death.

"COVID-19 has opened a Pandora's box of something that's always been there and shown the major inequities we face as the first nations of this land," family physician Michelle Tom told VICE News.

Tom grew up on the reservation and now works at Winslow Indian Health Care Center, which serves the 17,000 people who live along the southwestern edge of the reservation in Winslow, Arizona. The location has only one specialist, two ventilators, no ICU units, and no ER doctors on call.

"We have, per capita, probably the highest rate of diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and COVID seeks that out. And it makes us most vulnerable. So as a people, it's hitting us hard," Tom said.

For decades, the Navajo Nation has promised its own residents access to water. The Nation's leadership doesn't have the money to build the infrastructure it would take to get all of its residents access to water. And even if they did, they'd run into a web of federal regulations governing their access to bodies of water as a sovereign nation.

When Jonathan Nez was elected president of the Navajo Nation in 2018, he pledged to resolve water-rights issues once and for all. But so far, no major water projects have been started.

Even beyond the critical infrastructure problems the reservation is facing during the pandemic, mismanagement of federal funds is making matters worse.

The first COVID-19 relief bill, which was signed by President Trump on March 27, allocated \$600 million to help the Navajo Nation respond to the crisis. But the money wasn't received until nearly two months later. By that point, Navajo Nation was on track to outpace New York in per-capita rates of infection.

The Navajo Nation government then received an additional \$114 million from the U.S. government after tribes, including Navajo Nation, sued the Treasury Department for mismanagement in distributing the aid. But even after receiving the federal funds, most of the money sat untouched for months on Nez's desk.

"The money is in our bank account. And right now, as we speak, June 19th, the Navajo Nation Council is debating our fund management plan for the nation," Nez told VICE News.

Since then, the Navajo Nation Council has proposed how to allocate the funds. A majority will go toward water projects, but it's unclear if there's a real path forward, especially with restrictions from the federal government on how quickly the funds must be used.

In the meantime, weekend lockdowns are still in effect as the virus continues to move through the reservation.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 UK suspends Hong Kong extradition treaty
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/07/20/uk-britain-suspend-extradition-treaty-hong-kong-china-human-rights/?hpid=hp_world1-8-12_uk1206p%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans
GIST	Britain on Monday suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong amid worries about a new national security law that Beijing imposed on the former British colony.

“The government has decided to suspend the extradition treaty immediately and indefinitely,” Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in an announcement to British lawmakers.

“We would not consider reactivating those arrangements, unless and until there are clear and robust safeguards which are able to prevent extradition from the U.K. being misused,” Raab, a former human rights lawyer, told Parliament.

The suspension comes as London and Beijing find themselves at increasing odds over a variety of issues, including Britain’s move to bar Chinese tech giant Huawei from its 5G wireless networks and growing public anger in Britain over the treatment of the Uighur minority in Xinjiang, an autonomous territory in China.

On Sunday, China’s ambassador to Britain was interviewed on the BBC, where he was pressed on footage that appeared to show blindfolded Uighurs being forced onto trains. “There is no such concentration camps in Xinjiang,” Liu Xiaoming said. “... There’s a lot of fake ... accusations against China.”

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is traveling to Britain this week for a two-day visit, with China and Hong Kong expected to be a topic of discussion as he meets with British leaders.

The British government has had an extradition treaty with Hong Kong for decades. Under such laws, Hong Kong authorities can ask Britain to extradite anyone accused of a crime in the city and vice versa.

But the new national security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong this month drew increasing worries that those extradited from Britain could face draconian punishments. Canada and Australia have already suspended similar treaties this month.

Residents of Hong Kong, which has been a part of China since 1997, enjoyed a relatively large amount of freedom of speech and other political liberties under Beijing’s “one country, two systems” framework. But under the new laws, the city’s 7.5 million population is under the same speech restrictions as the mainland.

Under these laws, anyone deemed guilty of subversion could potentially face life imprisonment.

In response, Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government has said it would offer residency rights and a potential path to citizenship for as many as 3 million Hong Kong citizens. China condemned the move, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian telling Britain to “stop interfering in Hong Kong’s affairs and China’s internal affairs.”

Britain had been particularly concerned about Articles 55 to 59 of the controversial national security law, Raab said Monday, as they allowed mainland China authority to assume jurisdiction in certain cases and try those cases in mainland courts.

London and Beijing had increasingly warm ties only a few years ago, with many in Britain looking toward trade with China as a key part of the country’s post-European Union economic future. But that has changed as concerns about Hong Kong and other issues grew.

Britain announced last week that it would suspend new deployments of Huawei equipment in its fledgling high-speed 5G network, in line with requests from the United States, which said that the Chinese technology company was too close to the Chinese government and posed a national security threat.

The move accompanied a growing concern among the general public about Chinese intentions, with polling data from this year suggesting many Britons wanted a harder line on the country after the novel coronavirus pandemic began.

Liu’s appearance on the BBC’s “Andrew Marr Show” on Sunday prompted an angry response from some British public figures. The footage was later aired on China’s state-run television station CGTN, though the sections about the Uighur video were not shown.

	<p>Keir Starmer, the leader of Britain’s opposition Labour Party, said Monday that suspending the extradition treaty was a “step in the right direction,” but he added that Johnson’s government should impose sanctions on Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses.</p> <p>“Some of the actions of the [Chinese] government are deeply concerning and we can’t turn a blind eye,” Starmer said in a video posted to his Twitter account.</p> <p>Johnson said Monday that he did not want to become “a knee-jerk Sinophobe on every issue, somebody who is automatically anti-China,” but that his government had “serious concerns” about Hong Kong and Uighurs that could not be ignored.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 ‘Zero chance’ virus reversal w/out changes
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2034128/washington-outbreak-zero-chance-reverse-doh-report/
GIST	<p>The latest report from the Washington Department of Health warns that the state’s current COVID-19 outbreak could reach a critical level if more preventative measures aren’t enacted.</p> <p>“Washington state is in the early stages of an exponential statewide outbreak that has zero chance of being reversed without changes to our collective behavior and policies to support that change,” the DOH’s report — a collaboration with Fred Hutchinson and Bellevue’s Institute for Disease Modeling — reads.</p> <p>That’s due to rising transmission rates across the state, particularly in Eastern Washington. At the time of the DOH’s last report, Eastern Washington’s effective reproductive rate — the number of people a single person with the virus will likely infect — sat around 1.20. That number is now closer to 1.41, with “exponential growth” in Spokane that “shows no signs of slowing.”</p> <p>In Western Washington, hospitalizations are now starting to increase as well, “and continue to grow across all age groups” in Eastern Washington.</p> <p>“As transmission moves from younger adults into older more vulnerable populations, we expect new hospitalizations and eventually deaths to trend up across the state,” the DOH warns.</p> <p>On the state’s current trajectory, the Department of Health does not expect schools will be able to reopen safely this fall barring increased mitigation efforts in the coming months. That would necessitate “enhanced compliance” with mask-wearing, adherence to distancing policies, and further restricting large gatherings.</p> <p>“This is a matter of utmost urgency as we have seen from the beginning of the pandemic that measures enacted sooner have vastly greater efficacy,” the report continues.</p> <p>Similar surges in cases and deaths are occurring across the United States, according to the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).</p> <p>“Finally we’re now seeing that turn into a surge in deaths, not just in Florida, Texas, Arizona, California, but it’s spreading into a number of other states,” the IHME told CNN.</p> <p>The IHME now predicts that on its current trajectory, Washington could see as many as 3,170 COVID-19 deaths by November. Combined across the U.S., the IHME model predicts a possible death toll of over 224,000 people by that same time.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 DOJ: Seattle ban violated consent decree
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2033526/seattle-ban-crowd-control-weapons-consent-decree/
GIST	<p>The Seattle City Attorney's Office submitted a filing Friday, stating that the Department of Justice has informed the city that a recently-passed ban on the use of crowd control weapons violates an ongoing consent decree with the police department.</p> <p>Seattle's been operating under the consent decree since 2012 — led by then-U.S. Attorney Jenny Durkan — after a DOJ investigation “found a pattern or practice of excessive force that violates the U.S. Constitution and federal law.” The decree prohibits SPD from implementing policy changes without first submitting them to the DOJ and a federal monitor for review and approval.</p> <p>The city's Office of Police Accountability (OPA) and Office of the Inspector General (OIG) attached a joint statement to the filing, agreeing that the council bill banning the use, purchase, and storage of weapons like tear gas, rubber bullets, and more, violated procedures mandated by the consent decree.</p> <p>“OPA and OIG have procedural concerns regarding the impact of legislating matters under the Court's jurisdiction, as well as on the implementation of significant changes to SPD policy without allowing the accountability entities to provide input and recommendations for consideration by the City and the Court,” the statement reads.</p> <p>The ban was passed unanimously by Seattle City Council; Mayor Durkan left the bill unsigned, leaving it to take effect on July 26 (30 days after it was passed). The filing from the City Attorney's Office asks that the court hold off on any action regarding the ban until the OPA and OIG submit their own recommendations by August 15.</p> <p>Police Chief Carmen Best also attached a memorandum to the filing, asking the court to stop the ban from going into effect “until a thorough review is conducted by DOJ, the Monitor, and the Court,” a move Mayor Durkan supports as well.</p> <p>City Attorney Pete Holmes recently withdrew a motion that had initially asked the court to end the consent decree, following a series of clashes between protesters and police in May and June.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	07/20 Family of teen killed in CHOP files lawsuit
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2034502/family-teen-killed-chop-sues-seattle/
GIST	<p>The family of a 19-year-old shot and killed at the CHOP in June has filed a claim against the City of Seattle, King County, and Washington state for the wrongful death of Horace Lorenzo Anderson.</p> <p>The claim alleges that Seattle officials created a dangerous environment and personnel failed to protect or medically assist Anderson. Per state law, a claim must be filed before a lawsuit.</p> <p>Anderson was shot multiple times early June 20. Witnesses say Seattle Fire and Seattle Police stood by and declined to assist the teen as he bled to death. In fact, the claim cites a video posted on social media showing a man yelling at medics, “You guys could be saving this man's life right now. ... You could be saving his life. ... Sir, please explain, what's going on? He's dying. He needs your help.”</p> <p>Anderson was taken to Harborview Medical Center in a private vehicle. He later died at the hospital.</p> <p>Police said they responded to the scene after reports of gun shots in the area. SPD said officers tried to find a shooting victim, but were met by a violent crowd that prevented them safe access to the victims. They were later informed that CHOP medics took Anderson and another victim to Harborview.</p> <p>Anderson's mother wants answers for her son's death.</p>

	<p>Sixty days after filing the claim, Herrmann Law Group will file a lawsuit in federal court. The firm represents Anderson's mother, Donnitta Sinclair.</p> <p>Lawyers Lara Herrmann and Mark Lindquist issued a joint statement: "The actions and inaction of city officials have been outrageous in numerous ways. Lorenzo's family needs justice. The community needs the truth. Seattle government needs to be more transparent and accountable."</p> <p>In eight days, there were five shootings in the CHOP area with six victims. Police did not reclaim the East Precinct until after the final shooting incident on June 29, which left a 16-year-old dead and a 14-year-old injured.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Military medics deployed Calif. hospitals
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/20/us-military-medical-teams-california-hospitals-covid19
GIST	<p>US military medical teams have been deployed to five California hospitals to assist in a war against coronavirus that has taxed healthcare staff in hard-hit areas of the state.</p> <p>Doctors, nurses and other professionals dispatched by the US air force will join medical staff in northern California's Lodi, Fresno, Visalia and Stockton, and in southern California's Rancho Mirage, illustrating the sweeping toll the virus is taking on the nation's most populous state.</p> <p>Work is already under way for the 100 military healthcare professionals who reported for duty on Friday after the state requested assistance; 60 more staff members are expected to deploy by the end of the week, a military spokesman told the Los Angeles Times.</p> <p>The relief comes as medical officials describe a shortage of medical workers as the biggest challenge to responding to the ongoing surge.</p> <p>Coronavirus continues to spread rapidly across the Golden State, with total cases now topping 387,000 and 7,700 deaths attributed to the virus. The virus's growing spread has 33 counties placed on a state monitoring list, based on healthcare metrics, accounting for 92% of the state's population.</p> <p>The number of cases continues to climb and, while the positivity rate of those tested has dropped slightly over the past week from 7.7% to 7.2%, nobody is comforted while rates are north of 7%, Governor Gavin Newsom said in a news conference on Monday. Hospitalizations continue to rise, creating pressure for hospitals in the state's hotspots.</p> <p>In rural Placer county, for example, just 18% of ICU beds are available. San Benito county currently has no capacity to handle more ICU admissions, Newsom said, a reminder that "county by county, things look very different than they do statewide."</p> <p>Military doctors have also joined the ranks of healthcare professionals in Texas and Florida as the states continue to set daily records for deaths and new infections.</p> <p>California's rising numbers prompted Newsom last week to roll back reopening plans and close all bars and indoor operations at movie theaters and museums.</p> <p>As cases in Los Angeles over the weekend topped 2,200 for the first time, Mayor Eric Garcetti told CNN that the city opened too quickly, and said he was on the "brink" of issuing a new stay-at-home order.</p> <p>"I think a lot of people don't understand, mayors often have no control what opens up and doesn't – that's either at a state or county level," Garcetti said. "And I do agree that those things happened too quickly," Garcetti told CNN.</p>

	<p>Local leaders challenged Garcetti's claim, pointing out that mayors can issue local orders that are stricter than the state's, but can't be more lenient.</p> <p>Three suburban counties surrounding Los Angeles are on watch as coronavirus cases per capita in Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange counties last week surpassed per-capita infections in Los Angeles.</p> <p>Even as some residents of Orange county continue to organize resistance against face masks, evidence that masks can effectively slow the spread of covid continues to mount.</p> <p>Last week, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the nation could flatten its curve through the use of masks.</p> <p>"If we could get everybody to wear a mask right now, I think in four, six, eight weeks we could bring this epidemic under control," said the CDC director, Robert Redfield.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Thousands strike, protest; racial inequality
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/20/strike-for-black-lives-thousands-racial-inequality
GIST	<p>Organisers of the Strike For Black Lives said tens of thousands of Americans walked out of work in more than two dozen cities at noon on Monday, to protest against systemic racism and economic inequality.</p> <p>At noon in each time zone, workers took a knee for just short of nine minutes, the amount of time prosecutors say the white police officer Derek Chauvin held his knee on George Floyd's neck before Floyd died in Minneapolis on 25 May.</p> <p>Labour unions and social and racial justice organizations from New York to Los Angeles took part. Where work stoppages were not possible for a full day, participants were planning to either picket during a lunch break or observe moments of silence to honour black lives lost to police violence, organisers said.</p> <p>"We are ... building a country where black lives matter in every aspect of society, including in the workplace," Ash-Lee Henderson, an organiser with the Movement for Black Lives, told the Associated Press.</p> <p>"The Strike for Black Lives is a moment of reckoning for corporations that have long ignored the concerns of their black workforce and denied them better working conditions, living wages and healthcare."</p> <p>Among the strikers were essential workers including nursing home employees, janitors and delivery men and women. Fast food, ride-share and airport workers also took part.</p> <p>Strikers are demanding sweeping action by corporations and government to confront systemic racism and economic inequality that limits mobility and career advancement for many black and Hispanic workers, who make up a disproportionate number of those earning less than a living wage.</p> <p>Specifically, they are calling on corporate leaders and elected officials to use executive and legislative power to guarantee people of all races can thrive. That demand includes raising wages and allowing workers to unionise to negotiate better healthcare, sick leave and childcare support.</p> <p>In Manhattan, essential workers were expected to gather outside the Trump International Hotel to demand the Senate and Donald Trump pass and sign the Heroes Act.</p> <p>The House-passed legislation would provide protective equipment, essential pay and extended unemployment benefits to workers who have not had the option of working from home during the</p>

	coronavirus pandemic. The Republican-held Senate has not taken it up and is negotiating its own stimulus measures .
	Organisers said the New York senator Chuck Schumer was expected to rally with workers.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 Women in Afghan security forces
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/20/world/asia/afghanistan-women-police.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>KHOST, Afghanistan — Motivated, educated and fresh from finishing police academy in Turkey, Second Lt. Zala Zazai had stellar qualifications for the job she took in eastern Afghanistan in June. It all mattered little once she started.</p> <p>On social media, she was called a prostitute, and men wrote that her very presence on the force would corrupt Khost Province, where she was posted. Her colleagues at Police Headquarters — where she was the only female officer on a staff of nearly 500 — tried to intimidate her into wearing a conservative head scarf and traditional clothes instead of her uniform, and to hide in back corners of the office away from the public, she said. Shopkeepers arrived at the station’s gates with no other business but to get a look at this novelty.</p> <p>Lieutenant Zazai, 21, came home from her first day feeling sick and frightened. She felt so unsafe that she asked her mother, Spesalai, who had accompanied her from Kabul, to stay with her at a shelter deep inside Police Headquarters. At night, the two women locked the door. During the day, Lieutenant Zazai scrambled to expedite the paperwork for a pistol.</p> <p>“I want to have something to defend myself with,” she said.</p> <p>Helping Afghan women, who were banished to their homes by the Taliban during their government in the 1990s, became a rallying cry for Western involvement in Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion in 2001. Two decades later, the rise of a generation of educated, professional Afghan women is an undeniable sign of change.</p> <p>Now, with the possibility of power-sharing talks opening between the Taliban and the Afghan government, many women are worried that the strides they have made are at risk. What adds to their concern is how fragile the gains remain after two decades, where every mundane step is still a daily battle.</p> <p>Even after more than a billion dollars spent on women’s empowerment projects, the daily reality for women trying to break into public roles — particularly with the government and the security forces — remains bleak. Women are still almost completely absent in high-level meetings where decisions of war, peace and politics are made. Work for women at routine jobs is a daily barrage of harassment, insult and abuse.</p> <p>Among the police forces, which have been the focus of diversification efforts for years, women still make up only 2.8 percent of employees — and that is the highest level in 18 years. Most of those 3,800 women are in hidden roles with little contact with the public, officials acknowledged. Only five of the total of about 200 military and civilian leadership positions at the Interior Ministry are occupied by women.</p> <p>For much of the past two decades, the task of including women in the police force often fell on former warlords and commanders whose beliefs about women differed only slightly from the Taliban’s, if at all.</p> <p>President Ashraf Ghani has increased the number of female ambassadors, introduced female deputy governors and ministers, and sent female deputies to the ministries of defense and interior. But Afghan society remains deeply patriarchal, and the few women who have risen to such positions face many difficulties.</p>

The strategy to include more women at less senior positions has been mostly to spend money and meet modest quotas. In the past six years, the Afghan government and its Western allies have spent more than \$100 million on building facilities to support Afghan women in the security forces. In Nangarhar Province, they spent \$6 million on a training facility for female police officers that remains unused three years after completion.

After repeated failures, recruitment efforts essentially boiled down to bribing women to join the force and stay. A woman's incentives to join the police include eight more benefits than her male counterparts, according to Hosna Jalil, the deputy minister of interior. On several occasions, women of retirement age were allowed to fake their IDs and lower their age to stay on the force, she said.

Still, the goal of a 5 percent female presence in the police forces has never been met.

"Every province I have gone to, the first thing I say is that you are a force that is only working for men — not for women or children, the two most vulnerable categories who are left behind," Ms. Jalil said.

It is not because qualified, willing women are lacking. It is because to join the police is to endure abuse and degradation.

Over the years, sexual harassment had been rampant in the security forces, with reports that the wives of officers killed in line of duty were harassed when they came to collect death benefits. The perception that female police officers were frequently harassed meant that women who were victims of domestic violence and other crimes dared not visit police stations.

"If only we had guaranteed a father that the dignity of your daughter is more protected in the ranks of the police because she has authority and professionalism here," Ms. Jalil said. "We haven't been able to create that mentality."

Among those who endured years of mistreatment to follow her dream of rising in the security forces is Capt. Rahima Ataee, a 13-year veteran of the Afghan police special forces who now serves as the uniformed secretary to Ms. Jalil in the Interior Ministry.

Captain Ataee's father, a retired police colonel, admitted her to the police academy, and her physical endurance qualified her for the special forces. She spent weeks at a time on the front lines in provinces under attack by the Taliban.

But at the mere question of how her male colleagues treated her in the field, she broke down. She said the bullying and abuse was such that "I developed mental problems."

She would not tell her father at the time, she said, because she thought it would break his heart and lead him to prevent her from working. Every time she complained about the work environment after returning from a mission, she said, she would often get the same answer: "Well, you are getting paid."

Before Ms. Jalil began her job as the deputy minister for strategy and policy — hired by Mr. Ghani to be fresh eyes in an institution long seen as corrupt and dysfunctional — she had to fight for acceptance.

Generals walked out of meetings when they found out she was in charge. Subordinates often fed her wrong information to undermine her.

"I often have to say I am not the head of the gender department — I am the policy and strategy deputy to the minister of interior. I work for this large force that is both male and female," Ms. Jalil said. "I may have a female outlook, but any woman who comes should come for their expertise, not for them being a woman."

These days, despite frequent sexist attacks on social media, Ms. Jalil says she has found her footing as part of a leadership team that is working to reform the police. They spend long hours in a quiet basement office poring over charts of a bloated structure that they are trimming, and have removed unnecessary bureaucratic steps that created opportunities for corruption. They are trying to hold the officers to new standards of accountability, and to better care for the families of tens of thousands of police officers killed in decades of war.

Lieutenant Zazai, who serves at the Police Headquarters in Khost, grew up in Kabul, the capital. Her mother has been the head of their household for seven years, and although her male relatives were opposed, she, her older sister, and her mother attended after-hours university classes financed with their own day jobs. Another sister is a student of Islamic studies.

She and her older sister are now both police officers. But they were only willing to take the first step when the opportunity to train in Turkey came up because of concerns about harassment and abuse in the local training academies.

The signs of the difficulty ahead were clear when the women arrived at the Police Headquarters in Khost to obtain signatures needed for their applications and an officer castigated them for wanting to join the force.

“What kind of a mother are you, bringing your young, unmarried daughters to become police?” Spesalai Zazai recalled one of the officers telling her.

After starting her job in June, Lieutenant Zazai found a difficult and lonely environment. At the time, she was the only professional female officer in Khost.

On her first day, she was catcalled by her fellow officers. Those at her office tried to convince her that it was better for her to work in conservative Islamic garb than to wear a uniform. When she insisted, they found a new tack: She should wear a mask, even though her colleagues did not. The pretext was Covid-19, the intention was covering her.

For the first two weeks, Lieutenant Zazai would spend her days at work, and in the evening she would retreat to the government guesthouse where her mother kept her company. She hadn’t faced a direct physical threat, she said, but she was aware of the reality, and her lack of a weapon added to her vulnerability.

She was devastated when her mother had to go back to Kabul, but Lieutenant Zazai is trying to make a go of it in Khost.

“May God make it easier,” she said. “But I have to find the strength — because it can’t go on like this, women should claim their place. I know if I spend a year here, it will make a difference.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 More federal law enforcement to cities
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/20/us/politics/trump-chicago-portland-federal-agents.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Trump plans to deploy federal law enforcement to Chicago and threatened on Monday to send agents to other major cities — all controlled by Democrats.</p> <p>Governors and other officials reacted angrily to the president’s move, calling it an election-year ploy as they squared off over crime, civil liberties and local control that has spread from Portland, Ore., across the country.</p>

With camouflage-clad agents already [sweeping through the streets of Portland](#), more units were poised to head to Chicago, and Mr. Trump suggested that he would follow suit in New York, Philadelphia, Detroit and other urban centers. Governors and other officials compared his actions to authoritarianism and vowed to pursue legislation or lawsuits to stop him.

The president cast the confrontation in overtly political terms as he seeks an issue that would gain traction with voters at a time when many of his own supporters have soured on his leadership amid a deadly pandemic and economic collapse. Trailing badly in the polls with just over 100 days until the election in November, Mr. Trump assailed the “liberal Democrats” running American cities and tied the issue to his presumptive fall opponent, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

“I’m going to do something — that, I can tell you,” Mr. Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. “Because we’re not going to let New York and Chicago and Philadelphia and Detroit and Baltimore and all of these — Oakland is a mess. We’re not going to let this happen in our country. All run by liberal Democrats.”

The president portrayed the nation’s cities as out of control. “Look at what’s going on — all run by Democrats, all run by very liberal Democrats. All run, really, by radical left,” Mr. Trump said. He added: “If Biden got in, that would be true for the country. The whole country would go to hell. And we’re not going to let it go to hell.”

Democrats said the president was the one out of control. Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon said he would introduce legislation to limit the role of federal agents in cities like Portland. “This isn’t just an Oregon crisis,” he said. “It’s an American crisis. We need to stop Trump before this spreads.”

He added, “We won’t let these authoritarian tactics stand.”

Federal agents in Portland have snatched protesters off the streets and thrown them into unmarked vehicles without explaining why they were being detained or arrested, according to some of those who have been seized. Oregon’s governor, Kate Brown, has called it “a blatant abuse of power,” and the city’s mayor, Ted Wheeler, has called it “an attack on our democracy.” The state attorney general has filed a lawsuit seeking a restraining order against the federal agents for what she called unlawful tactics.

The Trump administration now [plans to deploy about 150 Homeland Security Investigations special agents to Chicago](#) in the coming days, according to an official directly involved in the operations. The special agents, known for conducting long-term investigations into serious crimes like human trafficking and terrorism, are expected to be in the city for at least 60 days to help combat violence and would be under the direction of the Justice Department.

Few are denying the city has a violent crime problem. Sixty-three people were shot in Chicago over the past weekend, 12 of them fatally. The White House referred questions to the Department of Homeland Security, which declined to comment, as did the Justice Department.

The Department of Homeland Security has put about 2,000 officials from Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Transportation Security Administration and the Coast Guard on standby to be quickly deployed to cities. At least 200 members of “rapid deployment teams” were sent to Washington, D.C., Portland, Pennsylvania and Seattle, the agency said this month. Many tactical agents from those teams from Customs and Border Protection and ICE are now in Portland.

Some cities have seen increased levels of crime since the protests over [George Floyd’s death while in police custody](#) in Minneapolis, but no president in modern times has threatened to send in federal law enforcement over local opposition.

In contrast to the president’s claims, many major cities [remain safer than they were decades ago, despite the recent uptick](#) in crime. Some protesters, including in Portland, have targeted federal property and officers with rocks and fireworks, and some protests weeks ago resulted in damage to businesses and looting. But most of the demonstrations throughout the United States have largely been peaceful.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot of Chicago made clear on Monday that the federal agents would be no more welcome in her city than they have been in Portland. “We don’t need federal agents without any insignia taking people off the street and holding them, I think, unlawfully,” she said at a morning news conference before reports of the deployment were confirmed. “That’s not what we need.”

In a four-page letter to Mr. Trump sent later in the day and obtained by The New York Times, Ms. Lightfoot said if the president really wanted to help Chicago, he should enact gun control, do more to curb the coronavirus and invest in community programs.

“Any other form of militarized assistance within our borders that would not be within our control or within the direct command of the Chicago Police Department would spell disaster,” she wrote.

Trump administration officials said the deployment to Chicago was separate from the operation in Portland, which ostensibly was to protect the federal courthouse there.

But the Homeland Security Investigations agents have broad authority to enforce federal laws in cities, and the Trump administration deployed them this year to so-called sanctuary cities in an enhanced arrest campaign against undocumented immigrants. The administration has also previously deployed federal officials to combat crime in Chicago, [including agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives](#).

The Department of Homeland Security asserted that it was acting within the law, pointing to 40 U.S. Code 1315. Chad F. Wolf, the department’s acting secretary, can deputize officers in any department agency, like ICE, Customs and Border Protection or the Secret Service, “as officers and agents for duty in connection with the protection of property owned or occupied by the federal government and persons on the property,” according to the law.

But the federal agents would not be limited to guarding federal property. Under the law, the agents could also conduct investigations of crimes committed against a federal property or federal officer throughout the city, Department of Homeland Security officials have said.

Carrie Cordero, a senior fellow for the Center for a New American Security, said that the federal statute did provide flexibility to tap members of various agencies to assist in guarding federal property, but that it was never intended to send border agents trained to investigate a drug cartel to crack down on protesters in the streets.

“What’s happening is the administration is using D.H.S. to perform basically a federal policing function, which in my view is unconstitutional and is certainly not what Congress intended when it created the department,” she said.

Stephen I. Vladeck, a law professor at the University of Texas at Austin, said it was not clear how federal agents could occupy the streets of a city that is 99 percent not federal property. “It’s of course the prerogative of the federal government to enforce federal law and protect federal property,” Mr. Vladeck said. “It is not the job of the federal government to be a general police force for all crimes.”

Governors, mayors and other officials from the cities that Mr. Trump named on Monday quickly rejected the uninvited intervention of federal agents.

“It is deeply disturbing that President Trump is once again choosing to spread hateful rhetoric and attempting to suppress the voices of those he doesn’t agree with,” said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan.

John Roach, a spokesman for Mayor Mike Duggan of Detroit, said the city had not suffered through the problems that others have after Mr. Floyd’s death. “Detroit is one of the few large cities in the country that

has experienced no fires, no stores looted and never requested the National Guard during the protests,” he said. “Not sure where the president is getting his information.”

Asked on Monday about whether he had heard the president’s mention of Oakland, Gov. Gavin Newsom of California — not known for his brevity — responded curtly: “No, and we’d reject it.”

In Philadelphia, the district attorney likened the clash to the fight against fascism in World War II and threatened to criminally charge federal agents sent to his city if they exceeded their authority. “Anyone, including federal law enforcement, who unlawfully assaults and kidnaps people will face criminal charges from my office,” [said the district attorney, Larry Krasner](#). “At trial, they will face a Philadelphia jury.”

Mr. Wolf dismissed the complaints, making clear that he had no intention to pull back regardless of the objections. “I don’t need invitations by the state, state mayors, or state governors to do our job,” Mr. Wolf said on Fox News. “We’re going to do that, whether they like us there or not.”

The dispatch of federal agents to cities has become a new front for a president seeking to regain political momentum heading into a fall campaign season. Eager to recast protests against racial injustice after the George Floyd killing into an us-versus-them battle for law and order, Mr. Trump in recent days has repeatedly blamed Democrats for countenancing violence and failing to stand up to crime.

Speaking with reporters in the Oval Office, Mr. Trump said federal agents had “done a fantastic job” in Portland, which was “totally out of control,” and he assailed the governor and other officials there for not welcoming the help. “These are anarchists,” he said. “And the politicians out there, yes, they’re weak, but they’re afraid of these people. They’re actually afraid of these people. And that’s why they say, ‘We don’t want the federal government helping.’”

He said other cities were in similar need of federal intervention, naming some of the nation’s largest urban centers. “How about Chicago?” he said on Monday. “I read the numbers where many people killed over the weekend. We’re looking at Chicago, too. We’re looking at New York.”

The policy closely mirrored the politics. At the same time the president was weighing the use of federal power, his campaign [posted an advertisement online](#) showing an elderly lady in her home at night trying to call 911 during a break-in only to be put on hold because the police had been defunded. “You won’t be safe in Joe Biden’s America,” the ad said.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Thailand large anti-govt. protests
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/v7gyby/thailand-largest-anti-government-protests-since-coup
GIST	<p>Though pandemic lockdowns prematurely quashed a burgeoning anti-government movement in March, recent days have seen some of Thailand’s largest anti-government protests since its 2014 military coup.</p> <p>According to Reuters, around 2,500 mostly young Thai protesters gathered at Bangkok’s Democracy Monument on Saturday to demand sweeping changes: the dissolution of parliament, an end to official harassment of government critics, and a rewriting of the nation’s constitution, which was most recently revised under the provisional military government in 2017. Smaller groups of protesters gathered at a military base and the prime minister’s office on Monday evening, the <i>AP</i> reports.</p> <p>“No one hates the nation here,” one protest leader said on Saturday, leading a crowd-wide rendition of the national anthem, the <i>Bangkok Post</i> reported.</p> <p>The protests went off in defiance of pandemic-related rules banning large gatherings, and police blared a recording of the text of the emergency law during the rally, but did not attempt to stop the demonstration, the <i>AP</i> reported.</p>

“Every revolution and every change requires someone who'll take the risk. We are standing up today to take that risk, so that our friends and fellow people can stand with us together,” Watcharakorn Chaikaew, founder of Thaprachan Awaken and first vice president of the Student Union of Thailand, told VICE News.

Chaikaew said that many Thais have witnessed what they view as abuses of power by authorities, injustice, and corruption, and are saying “we will tolerate no more with this system.”

With dissatisfaction with the government growing among young people, the protest was student-led, with speakers hailing from youth groups including Student Union of Thailand, Free Youth and Youth for Democracy. The group Liberation Youth organized Saturday's protest.

Protesters called for the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha, a former army chief who ousted the elected government six years ago. He retook the prime ministership in a 2019 election, although the vote was widely seen as being deeply flawed. Under his rule, the military and royalist elites have further consolidated power, deepening the chasm between the establishment and progressives.

Among the signs held up by protesters on Saturday were veiled references to the Thai monarchy, which, thanks to the country's strict lèse-majesté laws and traditional reverence for the king, would have once been unthinkable, *Reuters* reported. One person held up a sign that read “Lost faith is definitely not a crime!!!,” an apparent reference to an [incident](#) last week in which a man was sent to a psychiatric ward after wearing a T-shirt that read “I have lost faith in the monarchy.”

Chaikaew told VICE News that protesters want to see the government react to their demands within two weeks.

“If their action did not meet our demand we will elevate, consider hosting a bigger movement, bigger protest. At the same time our [peers] in parts of the region are hosting movements in their homes as well,” Chaikaew said.

Similar, but smaller peaceful actions [took place](#) in Chiang Mai and Ubon the day after the Bangkok protest. Free Youth also helped organize those rallies.

Viengrat Nethipo, a political scientist at Chulalongkorn University, told VICE News that some of her friends—all of whom have participated in pro-democracy protests over the last 10 years—were surprised at the new faces in the crowd this weekend.

In the past, Nethipo said, it was the same academics and activists who attended similar protests, but this weekend, young, new faces dominated. The young groups have also adopted a new style of organizing.

“There's been some learning from the Hong Kong protests, where these groups represent free individuals that come together rather than being anchored down by particular organisations or political parties,” Aim Sinpeng, a political scientist at the University of Sydney, told VICE News.

Meanwhile, issues affecting the young appear to be a driving force behind the latest protests. One trigger for the pre-pandemic anti-government action was a February court ruling that dissolved the country's second-largest opposition party, Future Forward, which enjoyed support from younger, more progressive Thais.

The June 22 [abduction](#) of a Thai political activist in nearby Phnom Penh, as well as the disappearance of other dissenters appears to have also increased tensions.

How the government will choose to respond, meanwhile, remains unclear.

	<p>“The government is keeping an eye on this and will hear the movement's needs. But to respond to the needs is another question,” Attasit Pankaew, a politics professor at Thammasat University, told VICE News.</p> <p>He said that because the movement was initiated by the youth, the issues raised must resonate more broadly with the public before the government takes them seriously.</p> <p>John Draper, director of the Social Survey Center at Khon Kaen University, told VICE News that he didn't believe the protesters' concerns were being heard by the government, with the two groups being “polar opposites in terms of norms, values, and ideologies.”</p> <p>“Fundamentally, the government is in a pressure cooker of its own making, and the protesters know this. The government has created an increasingly authoritarian surveillance state, fueled by ultra-nationalist perspectives,” Draper said, adding that some protesters are concerned that already-strict security laws will be further strengthened to eliminate the possibility of protest in the future.</p> <p>Sinpeng, the political scientist, said that young Thais had lost faith that the political elite are genuine about returning Thailand to democracy, and want to press the issue.</p> <p>“They want to know that the elders who are running the country hear them and take their concerns seriously. They want respect.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Top health official: 'having surge right now'
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/07/20/covid-live-updates-us/?hpid=hp_hp-banner-main_virus-luf-1238am%3Aprime-time%2Fpromo#link-EXKELS525RGXHH6XAKGHY4PGNE
GIST	<p>Much of the U.S. increase in coronavirus cases is in the Sun Belt, and health officials are responding “with extreme seriousness,” according to Adm. Brett Giroir, assistant secretary for health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.</p> <p>“We are having more cases now than we did a week ago, two weeks ago, three weeks ago, four weeks ago. That is very clear,” he said Monday on CNN’s “New Day.”</p> <p>Giroir said that the United States is probably having fewer cases compared with April because of increased testing but that “there is no question that we’re having a surge right now.”</p> <p>His statements came shortly after President Trump doubled down on his disproved claim that the United States’ world-leading infection numbers are attributable to increased testing.</p> <p>The wait time for test results has also been an issue in the country’s response to the pandemic. It can take up to a week or more to get test results, a delay that Giroir’s agency is working to reduce, he said.</p> <p>“About half of the testing in the country is either point of care, meaning 15 minutes or less, or at a local hospital, which is usually within one shift or 24 hours,” he said.</p> <p>In addition to following test turnaround times, HHS is also working to keep labs stocked with a limited supply of reagents. The increase in demand for testing and testing supplies has stretched supplies for labs thin, he said.</p> <p>“When we started out, we had trouble making 1,000 or 2,000 tests a day. ... Now, we’re going to be pushing a million tests per day,” Giroir said. He added that his department is trying to improve test wait times in hard-hit areas.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/19 World shock: US response to coronavirus
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/07/19/coronavirus-us-failure/?hpid=hp_hp-banner-main_virusfiasco-415p%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans
GIST	<p>Isabelle Papadimitriou, 64, a respiratory therapist in Dallas, had been treating a surge of patients as the Texas economy reopened. She developed covid-19 symptoms June 27 and tested positive two days later. The disease was swift and brutal. She died the morning of the Fourth of July.</p> <p>The holiday had always been her daughter's favorite. Fiana Tulip loved the family cookouts, the fireworks, the feeling of America united. Now, she wonders whether she'll ever be able to celebrate it again. In mourning, she's furious.</p> <p>Tulip, 40, had seen her country fail to control the novel coronavirus. She had seen Texas ease restrictions even as case counts and hospitalizations soared. She had seen fellow citizens refuse to wear masks or engage in social distancing.</p> <p>"I feel like her death was a hundred percent preventable. I'm angry at the Trump administration. I'm angry with the state of our politics. I'm angry at the people who even now refuse to wear masks," she said.</p> <p>Six months after the coronavirus appeared in America, the nation has failed spectacularly to contain it. The country's ineffective response has shocked observers around the planet.</p> <p>Many countries have rigorously driven infection rates nearly to zero. In the United States, coronavirus transmission is out of control. The national response is fragmented, shot through with political rancor and culture-war divisiveness. Testing shortcomings that revealed themselves in March have become acute in July, with week-long waits for results leaving the country blind to real-time virus spread and rendering contact tracing nearly irrelevant.</p> <p>The United States may be heading toward a new spasm of wrenching economic shutdowns or to another massive spike in preventable deaths from covid-19 — or both.</p> <p>How the world's richest country got into this dismal situation is a complicated tale that exposes the flaws and fissures in a nation long proud of its ability to meet cataclysmic challenges.</p> <p>The fumbling of the virus was not a fluke: The American coronavirus fiasco has exposed the country's incoherent leadership, self-defeating political polarization, a lack of investment in public health, and persistent socioeconomic and racial inequities that have left millions of people vulnerable to disease and death.</p> <p>In this big, sprawling, demographically and culturally diverse nation, the decentralized political structures gave birth to patchwork policies that don't make sense when applied to a virus that ignores state boundaries and city limits.</p> <p>While other countries endured some of the same setbacks, few have suffered from all of them simultaneously and catastrophically. If there was a mistake to be made in this pandemic, America has made it.</p> <p>The single biggest miscalculation was rushing to reopen the economy while the virus was still spreading at high rates through much of the country, experts say. The only way to reopen safely, epidemiologists said as far back as early April, was to "crush the curve" — to drive down the rate of viral transmission to the point that new infections were few and far between.</p> <p>Many countries did just that. The United States did not follow the expert advice. Now, the curve is crushing America.</p>

“We didn’t have the stick-to-itiveness, the determination, to carry through what we started in March, April and May, and now the virus is taking advantage of that,” National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins said.

“If we’d had really strong guidance from local, state and national leaders, maybe we could have sustained the determination to get the curve all the way down to zero,” he said. “Now, we’re on the upswing, and I don’t quite see the top of the upswing yet.”

America, the outlier

Other countries have managed to avoid the kind of dramatic viral resurgence that is happening in America. Spain, Italy, Germany and France — all devastated by the virus months ago — drove coronavirus cases and deaths to relatively low levels. The United Kingdom has been an outlier in Europe, with one of the highest per capita death tolls in the world, but after suppressing transmission, it has not seen a major rebound.

And in Asia, the picture is radically different. In Taiwan, baseball fans sit in the stands and watch their teams play. Japan has had fewer than 1,000 deaths from covid-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus. South Korea has had fewer than 300. Vietnam has recorded no deaths from the virus.

The death rate from covid-19 in the United States looks like that of countries with vastly lower wealth, health-care resources and technological infrastructure.

America’s mishandling of the pandemic has defied most experts’ predictions. In October, not long before the novel coronavirus began sickening people in China, a comprehensive review ranked the pandemic preparedness of 195 countries. The project — called the [Global Health Security Index](#) and spearheaded by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security and the Nuclear Threat Initiative — assigned scores to countries as a way to warn them of the rising threat of infectious-disease outbreaks.

With a score of 83.5 out of 100, the United States ranked No. 1.

How did the nation get caught so flat-footed? By not really trying, said Beth Cameron, who helped lead the project for the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

The federal government punted the coronavirus response to the states, counties and cities, said Cameron, who was senior director for global health security and biodefense on the White House National Security Council and helped write a pandemic response plan under President Barack Obama. The [team Cameron led was disbanded](#) after Donald Trump took office.

“I just never expected that we would have such a lack of federal leadership, and it’s been deliberate,” she said. “In a national emergency that is a pandemic, spreading between states, federal leadership is essential. And if there was any doubt about that, we ran that experiment from March and April until now. It failed. So we have to run a different experiment.”

A nation of individuals

Somehow, this highly mobile virus keeps sneaking up on communities, seeding itself extensively before people detect the breadth and intensity of the attack. That happened catastrophically in New York City early in the pandemic. The new outbreaks have been largely in the South and West.

This month, Roy Ramos, a reporter for WPLG-TV in Miami, noticed he had a cough. He and his wife, the station’s evening news anchor, Nicole Perez, went to get tested for the coronavirus. Positive — both of them. Soon, another anchor and the station’s chief meteorologist had tested positive, too.

As of July 14, 10 station employees had tested positive, including some who hadn’t even been in the office or in contact with their co-workers. The virus was everywhere in South Florida, which is now reeling from the pathogen’s assault.

“This is not a political message, but a personal one,” Perez’s co-anchor, Calvin Hughes, told viewers. “Please, please wear a mask.”

In the minds of many Americans, the coronavirus crisis that was so alarming in March and April lost its fearsomeness in May and June, when people tried to resume something approximating a normal life. The shutdowns had been miserable, but they’d been effective.

The success of the shutdowns meant that many Americans didn’t know anyone personally sickened by the virus. In places with low transmission, the crisis seemed far away.

“We just let our guard down,” Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine (R) said in an interview Friday. “Some people when they heard, ‘Hey, Ohio’s open,’ what they mentally processed is, ‘It’s safe. We can go out and do whatever we want to. It’s back to normal.’ ”

In the past two months, the virus has been smoldering in his state, the governor said, and “now we start to see some flames.” He fears Ohio could soon have the kind of runaway transmission afflicting Florida.

“Florida a month ago is where Ohio is today. If we don’t want to be Florida, we’ve got to change what we’re doing. Everybody’s got to mask up,” the governor said.

He and others cite human nature as a problem with containing the virus. Human brains simply aren’t wired to emphasize the importance of doing things, like wearing masks, that protect others but offer no immediate payoff, said Paul Slovic, a University of Oregon psychologist.

“You don’t get rewarded for putting on a mask,” Slovic said. “You don’t see who you’ve protected from harm, but you do feel an immediate discomfort.”

Protecting one life — or even one small puppy — generates a major emotional response that can prompt action, Slovic has found. But as the number of individuals involved increases — say, to the 137,000-plus deaths caused by the coronavirus — people grow inured to the loss, less prone to take action.

That makes public messaging especially essential, experts say. But the messaging in the United States has been all over the place. Even the scientists have struggled: They were wobbly on the effectiveness of masks before eventually embracing them.

Kristin Urquiza, 39, said she tried warning her father, Mark — a lifelong Republican — against going out and risking infection. In their home state of Arizona, as leaders including Gov. Doug Ducey (R) sprinted to reopen in May and June, Urquiza could tell she was losing the argument.

“When the president, the governor and people on cable news are all saying one thing, how do you compete with that?” she said. “He would push back. ‘I hear what you’re saying, but why would the governor say it’s safe to go out if it’s not true?’ ”

Her father died of the virus June 30. In [the obituary she wrote](#), she lashed out at government leaders. “He was a huge supporter of Trump and Arizona governor Ducey. He believed what they said. And they betrayed him,” she said in an interview.

When there’s no cavalry to send

Even before the pandemic hit, local public health agencies had been decimated by years of staffing and budget cuts.

They had lost almost a quarter of their overall workforce since 2008 — a cut of almost 60,000 workers, according to national associations of health officials. The agencies’ main source of federal funding — the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s emergency preparedness budget — had been cut 30 percent since 2003.

Public health is an enterprise with an intrinsic problem: People can't see sicknesses avoided or deaths averted.

"You don't see the results. It's a dog that doesn't bark," said David Himmelstein, professor of public health and health policy at the CUNY School of Public Health.

"The question is, does the water come out of your tap clean? Are the sewer systems being inspected? Are restaurants and food being inspected? Those things, you don't notice until they fail," he said.

The country's electronic disease surveillance systems are "archaic and cumbersome," said Cathy Slemple, who was recently dismissed as West Virginia's public health commissioner after the governor blamed her for failing to reclassify certain coronavirus cases as recovered.

"We're driving a Pinto and want to have a Ferrari," she said.

The public health challenges are keenly felt in Malheur County, a vast swath of mostly federal rangeland in rural eastern Oregon. About a quarter of its 30,000 residents live in poverty. Teen pregnancy rates are double the statewide rate. There's one school nurse for 10,000 square miles. Drug use is high.

The first coronavirus case hit March 30, and for more than a month, the county averaged just one to two cases a week. There was resistance to a statewide shutdown in the conservative area, but most people were willing to observe temporary restrictions, said Sarah Poe, director of the county health department.

But after a month or so, residents began to complain of government overreach. Many felt they had to resume working to survive, she said.

"People's response has been to just take care of themselves, take care of your own business, your own family," Poe said. "That's not how this virus works."

Now, the coronavirus is a full-blown crisis in Malheur County. Cases began soaring three weeks ago, to 15 or 16 a day. As of Friday, the county had 477 cases. The cumulative positive rate since the first case is nearly 16 percent — quadruple the state's rate.

On Wednesday, facing an accelerating caseload, Malheur County commissioners [passed a resolution](#) that goes further than the state's mask order. It recommends gatherings of no more than 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors, and mask-wearing in groups indoors and out.

But resistance in the county remains high. Poe said she regularly gets hate mail and phone calls [accusing her of peddling a hoax](#).

"We're up against just a ton of misinformation," she said. "What are we fighting here? We are fighting a virus and our goal is to save lives. Let's not be distracted into fighting other people."

A turning point

America, experts say, is approaching a tipping point at which its public health systems could become so overwhelmed they begin to collapse. Already, coronavirus test results take so long to come back they are almost useless for anything except as a historical record.

The delays have a cascading effect. Contact tracing is rendered ineffectual. Containing the virus by isolation becomes impossible. And as hospitals fill, the virus's fatality rate could inch upward because of overtaxed ICU nurses and doctors struggling to care for so many.

But the most dangerous cascading effect could be despair — a loss of hope, along with the resolve to fight the virus, warned Michael T. Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy.

“When that happens, you lose the ability to act rationally. You lose the commitment to fight. You lose all chance of beating back the virus,” he said.

Adam Fleming Petty, a writer in Grand Rapids, Mich., said he feels that demoralization acutely — as well as “so much rage” at Trump and other political leaders whose measures did not quell the virus enough to allow many schools to open.

“One thing I told myself was, ‘Okay, as long as school starts back up in the fall, I can do this. I can make it through the summer if I have that goal waiting for me.’ Now, that goal isn’t there anymore,” said Petty, 38, who has been the primary supervisor of two daughters, ages 5 and 7, while his wife works from home. For four months, the family has socialized with only a handful of relatives just a few times.

“This is far from the first time that governmental administrative incompetence has been displayed. But I can’t remember the last time that the consequences of that were so personal,” Petty said.

Governors and local officials across the Sun Belt have announced incremental measures in recent days to halt the viral resurgence. California instituted a statewide mask requirement. Arkansas and Colorado did so Thursday. Arizona allowed local jurisdictions to implement mask mandates as they see fit.

Florida’s governor has resisted weeks of calls to implement such a mandate. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) announced Wednesday that all local mask mandates in his state are void.

Louisiana and Texas recently shut down bars all over again. Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey (R) announced a statewide mask mandate in recent days as an alternative to closing. West Virginia limited gatherings to 25 people or fewer.

In New York, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) threatened to close restaurants if social distancing is not taken seriously.

“Closing the bars is going to be the equivalent of fixing three of the five screen doors in your submarine,” said Osterholm, who says that places with high levels of transmission need to return to the kind of shutdowns common in March and April.

In a telephone interview, Cuomo said New York officials were caught off guard early in the year because everyone assumed the virus was coming into the West Coast from China. But it had already spread in Europe, and from there to New York.

“We didn’t find out until after the fact. You don’t have the revelation by the academics until mid-March that this was one of the great health blunders of all time,” Cuomo said. “You actually got hit by a bus that came from the other direction.”

He expressed dismay about the national failure to suppress the virus.

“If you could have written a prescription four months ago, a manual — ‘This is what you must do to deal with a virus’ — and if people could just follow the manual, we would be over this, like other countries are over it,” Cuomo said. “I think it exposed a fundamental weakness in this country. We have a divided country.”

New York beat back the virus by closely following the scientific data and being cautious about reopening the economy, Cuomo said. Many places suffering high rates of infections didn’t do that, he said.

“It was science denial meets government incompetence,” he said.

‘The exception and anomaly’

This crisis has been sucked inexorably into the vortex of political polarization.

Trump repeatedly downplayed the viral threat. “You have 15 people, and the 15 within a couple of days is going to be down to close to zero,” he said in late February. On Twitter, he cheered on citizen protests of shutdowns that had been ordered by Democratic governors. He did not wear a mask in public until July 11.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Matthews in a statement defended the administration’s response to the crisis, saying Trump “has led an historic, whole-of-America coronavirus response — resulting in 100,000 ventilators procured, sourcing critical PPE for our frontline heroes, and a robust testing regime resulting in more than double the number of tests than any other country in the world. ... This strong leadership will continue as we safely reopen the economy, expedite vaccine and therapeutics developments, and continue to see an encouraging decline in the U.S. mortality rate.”

A White House official on background defended the president’s support for reopening the economy while the virus was still spreading, citing Trump’s belief that the cure cannot be worse than the disease: “There are consequences to staying closed, including but not limited to missed doctors’ appointments, drug or alcohol misuse, and suicide as a result of the pandemic.”

Future historians will not treat kindly Trump’s efforts to divide and confuse, said James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association.

“You look at the Great Depression and how Roosevelt made a concerted effort to unite the country — the fireside chats, the New Deal. That is the instinctive reaction of almost every president in crisis. Even if you don’t succeed, you try to convince people that they’re all in this together,” Grossman said. “This presidency is the exception and anomaly.”

Many Americans now believe the pandemic has been exaggerated, or even fabricated, by scientists and the mainstream news media. The rejection of scientific expertise has flowered into a conspiracy theory holding that the experts are lying as part of a political agenda.

“The most outrageous lies are the ones about Covid 19. Everyone is lying. The CDC, Media, Democrats, our Doctors, not all but most, that we are told to trust,” former “Wheel of Fortune” game show host Chuck Woolery [tweeted July 12](#).

Trump retweeted that. Days later, Woolery revealed his son was sick with the virus, and he has since taken down his Twitter account.

To be an American

As she prepares for a three-day drive across the country — from New York to Texas — to bury [her mother](#), Tulip said she has been thinking a lot about what it means to be American.

She was raised like many Texans, unabashedly proud of her roots and her patriotism. “I grew up a Dallas Cowboys fan. All about the stars and stripes. You know that song ‘Proud to Be an American’? We would literally sing that as kids in elementary school and mean every word.”

Now, she said, she feels betrayed by her country and home state. For the past two weeks, she and her husband have been calling funeral homes in Brownsville, unable to get through because the town has been overwhelmed by the virus.

“I desperately want to believe we as a country can change, that we can recover from where we are now,” she said. “I want to believe that America can get back to who we were, a proud country, one where people can thrive and not suffer.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/amid-surge-in-covid-19-companies-and-parents-brace-for-more-child-care-conflicts-11595206800?mod=hp_listc_pos3
GIST	<p>Child-care problems are getting worse for many parents and employers amid a nationwide surge in Covid-19 cases.</p> <p>With schools considering extending classroom closures in favor of online education, and day-care centers weighing whether they can afford to stay open under social-distancing guidelines, companies are forced to improvise anew to balance productivity with increasingly uncertain child-care options for their employees.</p> <p>“Until school starts, we haven’t made any policies because we just don’t know what the future holds,” says Jack McBride, CEO of Contec, a maker of infection-control products.</p> <p>Contec has 850 employees, including about 500 at manufacturing facilities in its home base of Spartanburg, S.C., that have mostly stayed open during the pandemic. Many workers have relied on family and friends for backup child care, says Mr. McBride. Some switched to overnight shifts to be caregivers during the day, but that schedule is unsustainable for parents in the long term, he says.</p> <p>After the pandemic closed schools in March, Contec offered up to 12 weeks of leave for people on staff at least a year. Now with coronavirus cases surging in many states including South Carolina, the company is considering new options such as subsidizing local child-care centers to help keep them open.</p> <p>Mr. McBride was one of several current and former chief executives who signed a letter to Congress in May urging economic relief for both home-based and larger-facility child-care operations.</p> <p>Roughly 13% of parents have lost jobs or reduced work hours because of a lack of child care during the pandemic, according to a coming report by Northeastern University. And their options are dwindling.</p> <p>In March, Congress approved the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave for employees who are parents of homebound children through the end of 2020. Companies with more than 500 workers are exempted, and businesses with fewer than 50 employees can also apply for an exemption.</p> <p>School districts in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego have said they won’t reopen in the fall as California rolled back its reopening plans, and more cities including Houston, Atlanta and Nashville, Tenn., have said they, too, will begin the year with remote learning only. In New York City, the nation’s largest public school system has a plan that keeps children at home a few days a week, a model being considered across the U.S.</p> <p>Meanwhile, about 18% of child-care centers and 9% of family child-care homes remain closed, and 82% of child-care programs overall say they don’t expect to survive longer than a year, according to a July 13 report from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.</p> <p>In Atlanta, Jeresha White owns three child-care centers licensed for about 200 children combined. She has since reopened one center, and enrollment hasn’t reached more than 10 children at a location that used to care for up to 80. Some of her parents have lost jobs and stopped coming, while other parents working through the pandemic in health care and restaurants are relying on her. At the current rate, she’s unsure about staying in business beyond the next three months.</p> <p>“Now, I’m in a worse state of uncertainty than I was when all of this happened,” Ms. White says.</p> <p>One of her parents, Meosha Andrews, brings her two youngest children, ages 3 and 5, to the center. During the pandemic, Ms. Andrews has worked from home with all four of her children, who include a middle-schooler and elementary-schooler.</p>

“It’s hard trying to work from home, trying to be a teacher, trying to be a counselor, a cook,” says Ms. Andrews, who works in the health-care industry. “But also it has given me the opportunity to spend more time with them.”

With the expectation that remote work will continue, some companies are adjusting their existing family support programs, extending paid leave, backup child care and other benefits. They are also looking at new ways to further integrate family and work.

Cisco Systems—which has about 44,300 U.S. employees, nearly half of whom are parents or caregivers—already offered on-site child-care centers, which reopened in San Jose, Calif., after a temporary shutdown. About 31% of parents are using the services, some having returned to the office and others who continue to work from home. Cisco kept its offices open during the pandemic for facility-dependent workers, though a majority of the workforce shifted to home. Katelyn Johnson, who leads Cisco’s child-care operations, said the company has a plan to shift workers back to the office “because we do know the value of working on teams in person.”

The company is considering using their centers as a place where students in first through seventh grades can do their distance learning when schools are closed with the guidance of teachers, giving parents some extra support, Ms. Johnson says.

“We want to take off that mental stress of having to juggle work and home life at the same time,” she says. “If employees are not truly engaged, and they’re feeling overwhelmed, they’re not going to perform.”

Salesforce.com said parents will still be allowed to work from home until school resumes, even after offices reopen, and parental leave and backup child-care offerings have been extended and increased. This summer, the company is hosting a week-long virtual Salesforce Adventurers Club for children to have story time with executives, baking and coding lessons and other activities.

HubSpot, a 3,500-employee software company in Cambridge, Mass., in March hired two teachers to run virtual events for children such as story time or a session in which they learn about outer space. The company is now discussing how to create programs that are “not just for kids versus parents, but as families as a whole” while continuing a focus on flexibility for employees, says Eimear Marrinan, who is based in Dublin and joined HubSpot in May as director of culture.

During one of Ms. Marrinan’s first executive meetings on Zoom, one of her daughters interrupted and played the “Paw Patrol” cartoon. To her relief, members of the executive team responded by posting “Paw Patrol” backgrounds on their Zoom screens.

“That has shaped HubSpot—knowing that this is not a normal situation and breaking down that awkwardness,” Ms. Marrinan says.

[Return to
Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Retirees confront virus in Florida
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/20/us/coronavirus-florida-elderly.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>THE VILLAGES, Fla. — For months, many of the residents at one of America’s biggest retirement communities went about their lives as if the coronavirus barely existed. They played bridge. They held dances. They went to house parties in souped-up golf carts that looked like miniature Jaguars and Rolls-Royces.</p> <p>And for months they appeared to have avoided the worst of the pandemic. From March through mid-June, there were fewer than 100 cases in the Villages, a sprawling community in Central Florida where about 120,000 people mostly 55 and older live.</p>

But now as cases spike across Florida, the virus appears to have caught up with the residents of the Villages.

Since the beginning of July, hospital admissions of residents from the Villages have quadrupled at University of Florida Health The Villages, the hospital's critical care doctors said. As of last week, the hospital admitted 29 Villages residents, all of them with the virus, said Dr. Anil Gogineni, a pulmonologist and critical care doctor there. That was up from the single digits three weeks before.

In Sumter County, the biggest of three counties where most of the Villages is concentrated, the number of cases ballooned from 68 in the first week of June to more than 270 last week, according to the county's health department.

The Villages is a sprawling palm-tree-lined complex so big it has three ZIP codes, 12 golf courses and multiple libraries and movie theaters, drawing affluent retirees from all over the country.

Now many residents are confronting their new reality. "It's seeping in, no matter what," Rob Hannon, 64, said as he sipped a beer, adding that "friends that would come down for years are saying, 'We're not going to go.'"

The golf course is still crowded, he said, as well as the hair salon where his wife, Michelle, 53, works. "The women are still coming in but they're a little more anxious," Mr. Hannon said. "You can't stop living. But you can stop being cavalier."

In an email to residents last week, Jeffrey Lowenkron, the chief medical officer of the Villages, said cases were increasing and urged them to take "proactive steps to reduce the risk of disease transmission."

"They should consider postponing participation in social events with more than 10 people, particularly those events held indoors," he wrote. "The upward trend is accelerating."

That the Villages had initially seemed to escape the worst of the virus had been a point of pride for Gov. Ron DeSantis. The governor, a Republican who has strong support from the community, brushed off concerns about the risks during a visit in April. "There were articles written saying, 'Oh, the Villages is going to crash and burn,'" he said. "They have like a 2 percent or 2.5 percent infection rate."

But when he returned early in July, the infection rate had jumped to 9 percent.

More than a third of the cases in the state, one of the worst hit in the nation, have been among people age 15 through 34, particularly in big cities, according to the Florida Department of Health. There have been serious outbreaks since the beginning in jails, nursing homes and farms.

Now there are signs that the age of Floridians getting the virus is shifting. Jackson Health System, Miami-Dade County's public hospital, said last week that 18 percent of its coronavirus patients were 80 or older. Two weeks before, that figure was 9 percent.

About 20 percent of Florida's population is 65 or older, the highest percentage in the nation alongside Maine, and that age group has made up half of its coronavirus hospitalizations and over 80 percent of deaths. As of Saturday, more than 45,000 [of the state's 350,000-plus cases](#) are among that age group.

The rise in cases among older residents most likely stems from the spread of the virus by young people who are not taking preventive measures like wearing masks, said Dr. Madiha Syed, an infectious-disease specialist who works at University of Florida Health.

"You see, they don't wear their masks," Dr. Syed sighed. "What do you do?"

But even as cases climb, doctors in the Villages say they are prepared for an increase in patients. The hospital has enough capacity and antiviral drugs, Dr. Gogineni said.

One area of concern, however, is the four nursing homes in the community, and a number of others on the outskirts that also cater to residents.

Early in the pandemic, Mr. DeSantis took an aggressive approach to nursing homes, and the state's outbreaks were not as deadly as they were in places like New York. Mr. DeSantis banned visits to nursing homes, ordered them to not readmit residents unless they tested negative twice, and opened at least 14 coronavirus-only facilities.

That helped slow the spread, but now health officials are concerned that nursing homes will not be able to avoid a coming onslaught of cases.

Lady Lake Specialty Care, which sits just outside the Villages's boundaries and cares for some of its residents, reported 47 cases last week, according to Greystone Healthcare Management.

In the latest effort by the Florida government, the Agency for Health Care Administration last week issued a pair of emergency rules mandating that every nursing home and assisted living facility in the state test staff members every two weeks. (The rules do not apply to long-term care facilities.)

Mr. DeSantis on Wednesday said that more than 120,000 staff members of nursing homes and assisted living facilities have been tested during the past week, about 2.8 percent of whom were positive. "We are actually happy with that," he said. Still, he played down a recent outbreak at an unnamed long-term care facility in north-central Florida where 50 staff members had tested positive.

Even with the spike, many residents at the Villages say they are conflicted about the virus and what to do now.

Some steps have been taken to help slow infections. Crowds around the faux Spanish colonial buildings and fountains are smaller, theaters are closed and the bands have stopped playing.

Yet, residents still congregate every day without wearing masks. They turn up the volume on a radio and dance in the squares. They crowd bars where songs by Elvis Presley and Bobby Sherman play. There are picnics and water aerobics classes.

Jim Lomonaco, 67, a former law enforcement official, shrugged off the latest headlines.

"I'm not pushing my luck but I'm not overly concerned. If it's here, it's here by now — we don't have walls," he said on a recent day. Bursts of loud laughing were heard from other retirees clustered around tables at a nearby restaurant. A few feet away, dozens others were practicing a dance.

Don Phillippi and his partner, Flo Collins, both 79, sat in their golf cart watching them.

Ms. Collins, a retired nurse, said the couple wore masks when grocery shopping, and mostly stayed indoors playing card games. "I'm a nurse, so I know," she said.

The only time they socialize is when they celebrate a birthday with friends at a restaurant. "But we'll have a private room," Mr. Phillippi insisted. "And we take the temperature and all that kind of stuff. To make sure everybody is OK."

Even if they have had the virus, most Villages residents are reluctant to talk about it.

One resident declined to be interviewed because he was embarrassed after getting infected at a party.

"People are being very secretive," said Neil Craver, 66, who said he got the virus two weeks ago. "It's like the plague and they don't want to let anybody else know that they're sick."

	<p>Residents say they have not received any directions about informing the management if they get sick.</p> <p>About two-thirds of the residents are Republicans, according to local party chairs, and like elsewhere, some precautions are drawn politically.</p> <p>“You can tell who is a Democrat, who is a Republican by their masks,” said Chris Stanley, the leader of the Villages Democratic Club.</p> <p>“It makes no sense to me that there is some sort of a magical umbrella keeping the virus at bay, particularly because people are having parties around, with houses that have six, five golf cars parked out front,” she said.</p> <p>Amy Rose, a Villages resident, lost her husband, Chadwick, a lab technician at one of the Villages hospitals, to what she believes was the coronavirus. His death, however, was recorded as a heart attack.</p> <p>She and her husband both had coronavirus-like symptoms in January after visiting Disney World when the virus raised little concern in the United States. In April, Mr. Rose, 47, who had a heart condition, suddenly collapsed after exercising.</p> <p>Mr. Rose’s cardiologist told her the coronavirus had likely contributed to his heart attack by narrowing the arteries. “They said that because he had that history of a heart attack they didn’t do the autopsy. They just declared it.”</p> <p>“His death was very violent,” she said, breaking down in tears. “It was awful.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 California virus surge: what happened?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/21/us/california-coronavirus-surge/index.html
GIST	<p>Rancho Mirage, California (CNN)For the past 15 weeks, sleep is about the only time when Catherine Davis isn't thinking about Covid-19.</p> <p>Even then, she says she is sometimes awakened with thoughts of "How long are we going to sustain this? How long are we going to be faced with this every day?"</p> <p>Davis is the nursing director at Eisenhower Health in Rancho Mirage, California, a desert town in Riverside County about 100 miles from Los Angeles. She and her colleagues are nearing exhaustion as a surge of coronavirus cases has nearly overwhelmed the staff there.</p> <p>"Up until this (coronavirus outbreak), on my unit we would for the most part possibly lose one patient a year," she said. "We have had 40 deaths on our unit. However, we've treated over 700 patients."</p> <p>With a death count far beyond anything anyone in her unit has ever seen in such a short time, she said the staff are emotionally and physically spent.</p> <p>"We actually agreed as a staff, if we were comfortable with it, we would ensure that a patient would not die alone. So, we would take turns spending time with them and holding their hands and talking to them," Davis said.</p> <p>California was moving in the right direction This was not how Davis envisioned what would normally be a sleepy summer in her town. California appeared to be moving in the right direction when it came to Covid-19. It was the first state to impose a stay-at-home order on March 19. Less than two months later, on May 8, the numbers had fallen enough that the state started the first phase of reopening.</p>

California Gov. Gavin Newsom told his citizens, "[You have bent the curve.](#)"

But then Memorial Day came around. By early June the numbers started creeping back up. The seven-day average for daily coronavirus cases totaled more than 2,600. Then they skyrocketed.

By July 11, the seven-day average had risen to 9,400 new cases of coronavirus per day, a more than 250% increase. The numbers fluctuate daily but the trend shows California is in surge. By July 13, Newsom ordered the shutdown of bars, indoor dining, movie theaters, wineries and some other businesses across the state again.

So what went wrong?

Anne Rimoin, an epidemiology professor at the University of California Los Angeles, says the answer is simple. Some governments and people became complacent.

"You know, we opened up too soon. We didn't have the virus totally under control," Rimoin said. But, she added, "People are not following the rules. They're not wearing masks. They're not social distancing. They're not doing what it is that they need to do."

In places like Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange counties, masks are no longer required. In Orange County, which borders Los Angeles County, about 100 people attended a county Board of Supervisors meeting in mid-June to speak their minds about a mask mandate that had been in place just two weeks. Every speaker except one wanted the mask mandate eliminated.

"This mask mandate is ridiculous," one woman said as she stood at the microphone.

Another woman thought it was all based on a hoax. "None of this is based on science, but rather a nefarious political agenda to silence the people and strip freedoms from hard-working American," she said.

'Sicker than you can imagine'

They got their wish but now Americans are getting infected at alarming rates in their community. Any epidemiologist will tell you wearing a mask is no hoax but is based on simple science.

But if people don't believe public health officials, they might believe the nurses and doctors charged with taking care of the sick in their communities. They are seeing their hospital beds fill with people suffering from Covid19.

"They are sicker than you can imagine and beyond that. We are not trying to say that every person who gets the virus gets sick and ends up in the hospital, said Dr. Anil Perumbeti, a pulmonologist who works at Eisenhower Health in Riverside County. "But the numbers are so staggering that it's scary."

Los Angeles County is still the hardest hit. It is the most populous county by far with more than 11 million people. It has more than 40% of all the coronavirus positive cases in the state. Masks are mandated there but experts say it is clear that some people are flouting the rules.

The rise in cases is especially acute among people 40 and under, who are responsible for more than 50% of new cases.

While the county is testing tens of thousands of people daily, it takes longer to get an appointment to get a free test by the county and getting results is taking too long as well.

Among those helping fuel the spread are people 40 and under as they are responsible for more than 50% of new cases, according to the state Health Department.

	<p>The surge is also hitting the Latino community hard. Latinos are 38.9% of the state's population but account for 55% of cases in California, according to the state Health Department. That may be due in part to the fact that Latinos often live in multigenerational housing and Latinos make up a large portion of essential workers where there is an increased chance of being exposed to the virus.</p> <p>"Sometimes it's mom and dad's work experience that has brought them into contact with it," Davis said. "And then it goes through the whole family."</p> <p>For example a survey conducted in a heavily Latino population in southeast Los Angeles found 41% of residents say they continue to work outside of their home.</p> <p>In the end the solutions are simple but devastating. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said the city is nearing the brink of another shutdown order but Rimoin said the state was already there.</p> <p>"I really see no other choice, but for California to shut down right now, to really shut down for a couple of weeks so that we can get this virus under control," she said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Portland leaders plead for end to violence
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-moratorium-street-violence-police-targeted
GIST	<p>Protesters have drawn national attention after setting a fire inside the Portland Police Association building Saturday night.</p> <p>Portland Police said around 10:45, protesters broke into the PPA's building and almost immediately started a fire.</p> <p>The building on North Lombard Street is still covered with graffiti and remnants from the fire set Saturday night are still scattered inside.</p> <p>Ash Leabenworth lives a few houses down from the PPA and said while it's scary to see this happening on his street, he says dramatic action needs to be taken in order for change to happen.</p> <p>"We heard shouting and then after a little while we heard a pretty Big Bang which we came to realize was the dumpster being lit on fire in the middle of Lombard," Leabenworth said.</p> <p>He said he's lived on North Campbell street for eight years and up until a few weeks ago, it was a quiet area.</p> <p>"Especially last night when the union was caught on fire, so we felt pretty scared for our neighbors then. As much as we do support the protests it's been a trip having cops out here with their LRAD systems and blowing up the acoustics of the neighborhood," Leabenworth said.</p> <p>After seeing what's happening in Portland, Leabenworth said he understands why protesters are angry.</p> <p>"People are seemingly getting snatched off the streets by federal units that have been sent to Portland and people are understandably upset," he said. "I think that honestly the only thing that brings about change is showing up and doing something dramatic."</p> <p>The PPA held a press conference Sunday afternoon to address what happened. President Daryl Turner said the violence needs to end.</p> <p>"This is no longer about George Floyd; this is no longer about racial equity or social justice. This isn't about reform, or the evolution of policing. This is about violence, rioting destruction," Turner said.</p>

	<p>Several speakers joined Turner at the podium asking for the violence to end. Pastor J.W. Matt Hennessee with the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church said we all need to work on listening each other.</p> <p>"We want to work with you, and we ask for a moratorium, literally a moratorium on the streets to give us an opportunity to hear you. We want you to know we hear you. We understand there are issues you want to talk about," Hennessee said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Bankruptcies surge amid pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bankruptcies-chapter-11-up-26-percent-2020/
GIST	<p>The coronavirus pandemic is setting off a wave of corporate bankruptcies, with thousands of U.S. retailers, energy companies and other businesses succumbing to the recession caused by the pandemic.</p> <p>Through June 30, there were more than 3,600 Chapter 11 filings this year by companies seeking court protection from their debts — a 26% jump from the year-ago period, according to data from Epiq Global. And in June alone, amid signs the economic recovery is stalling as coronavirus cases surge around the U.S., bankruptcy filings surged 43%, the legal services firm found.</p> <p>Chuck E. Cheese, Hertz, J. Crew, J.C. Penney, and Neiman Marcus are just a few of the brand-name players that have declared bankruptcy this year after sales slumped during the pandemic. But financial experts think the worst is yet to come, with retailers and oil patch companies particularly vulnerable in what amounts to the sharpest drop in economic growth in decades.</p> <p>For example, companies such as Texas oil producer Lonestar Resources and Men's Wearhouse parent company Tailored Brands have recently skipped bond payments, a common sign of financial distress.</p> <p>"As government lifelines to help stabilize the economy begin to expire, bankruptcy provides a shield for households and companies facing intensifying financial distress," said Amy Quackenboss, executive director for the American Bankruptcy Institute, which also tracks filings. "We anticipate filings to begin increasing as a result."</p> <p>Bankruptcy doesn't necessarily spell a company's doom. Court supervision is designed to help companies shed or restructure their debt, restructure their business, and emerge from Chapter 11 as a more competitive company.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Heat wave hampers virus efforts, recovery
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/east-coast-heat-wave-helping-covid-19-efforts/story?id=71876129
GIST	<p>An East Coast heat wave that's triggered advisories and excessive heat warnings, combined with the U.S.'s ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, could force vulnerable people into making hard choices about their health, experts say.</p> <p>This week's heat index, which refers to how hot it feels outside, is expected to exceed 100 degrees in cities including New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.</p> <p>In response to a heat index expected to reach 110 degrees this week, Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser activated a heat emergency in effect through July 22 and closed outdoor public COVID-19 testing sites in the District.</p> <p>"We are in the middle of some very oppressive and hot days," Bowser said during a Monday news conference.</p> <p>"The temperatures would be too dangerous for our staff and volunteers at the public testing sites."</p>

Bowser encouraged D.C. residents to call their medical providers if they need a COVID-19 test or if they feel ill, since many private providers have inside testing facilities.

Cooling centers are open in neighborhoods across the city, with modified rules due to the pandemic, including social distancing. "Anyone entering a cooling center must wear a mask," Bowser said. "If you do not have a mask, one will be provided to you."

As with other aspects of the pandemic, this month's overlapping pandemic and heat wave highlight rampant inequality in the United States.

In extreme heat, vulnerable populations, such as older people living alone and homeless individuals who are exposed to the elements, may be especially susceptible to weather. Extremely hot weather [increases the risk of health problems](#) like heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration.

Where you live may dictate whether you survive a heat wave. As the [Washington Post previously detailed](#), poor residents are less likely to have air conditioning and more likely to have medical conditions that are aggravated by hot weather.

Cities are hotter than nearby rural areas and heat disparities also exist within cities themselves. In Washington, D.C., 40 percent of low-income residents live in areas with more empty space and fewer trees, which can contribute to higher heat in those neighborhoods, the [Washington Post reported](#).

High heat can have deadly consequences. During a heat wave in Europe in 2003, for example, 70,000 excess deaths were recorded, according to the [World Health Organization](#). Heat waves have been the top cause of fatalities in the U.S. on average over the past three decades, the [non-profit Natural Resources Defense Council](#) reports.

According to the WHO, extreme heat can also trigger higher levels of pollen, which can exacerbate conditions like asthma.

For individuals with respiratory problems, heat waves are already dangerous, according to Dr. Leigh Vinocur, a Baltimore-based emergency medicine physician and national spokesperson for the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Since COVID-19's symptoms can include respiratory problems and trouble breathing, high heat and humidity have the potential to interfere with recovery.

Cooling centers can offer relief for people without air conditioning in their homes or who are homeless, but also present the potential for disease spread in an indoor space with unrelated people crowding together.

The heat wave complicates the COVID-19 best practices that public health authorities have articulated to the public, including the notion that it's safer to be outside than inside, because the virus is harder to transmit outdoors, Vinocur noted. During a heat wave, you're not safer outside if you are going to die of heat stroke, she added.

The mid-Atlantic's high humidity also makes it harder for humans to regulate their own body temperature, according to Vinocur. "You can't even sweat to cool yourself off. There's no evaporation of sweat."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 FDA cracks down fruity disposable e-cigs
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/fda-calls-removal-fruity-disposable-puff-bar-vapes-71880571

GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- U.S. health officials are cracking down on fruity disposable electronic cigarettes popular with teenagers, saying the companies never received permission to sell them in the U.S.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration sent a letter Monday telling the company behind Puff Bar e-cigarettes to remove them from the market within 15 business days, including flavors like mango, pink lemonade and strawberry. An undated notice on the company's website says online sales and distribution have ceased "until further notice."</p> <p>The agency also sent warning letters to nine other companies either selling similarly unauthorized e-cigarettes or nicotine solutions that illegally appeal to children. Some of those mimic packaging of sweets and cereals like Twinkies and Cinnamon Toast Crunch.</p> <p>The seller of Puff Bar, Cool Clouds Distribution of Glendale, California, did not immediately respond to calls or emails seeking comment Monday.</p> <p>The regulatory action comes months after anti-vaping advocates warned that disposable vapes like Puff Bar were a glaring loophole in the FDA's ban on flavored e-cigarettes. That policy, which took effect in February, narrowly targeted reusable vaping devices like Juul, the blockbuster brand that helped trigger the teen vaping craze in the U.S. Under the policy, only menthol and tobacco flavors were allowed for those devices. But the flavor restrictions did not apply to disposable vaping products like Puff Bar.</p> <p>The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids in a statement called the FDA action a "welcome, necessary and overdue step," but also noted that it only addresses a "small number of these products and does not even cover all disposable e-cigarettes."</p> <p>The group has called for a ban on flavors for all types of vaping and tobacco products, including menthol. Vaping proponents say flavors can help adult smokers kick cigarettes, though the FDA has never approved any e-cigarette for that purpose.</p> <p>All U.S. vaping companies face a September deadline to submit their products for FDA review. The long-delayed process is part of the FDA's yearslong effort to regulate the multibillion-dollar vaping industry, which includes thousands of e-cigarette devices and nicotine solutions.</p> <p>For months, the FDA has been consumed with the coronavirus outbreak, reviewing new tests and treatments. Earlier this year, the agency suspended in-person inspections at vape shops and convenience stores aimed at enforcing sales restrictions. Late last year, the U.S. raised the legal age to purchase e-cigarettes and all other tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 India virus cases continue to surge
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/latest-37000-cases-india-testing-urged-71890152
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI — A surge of 37,140 new cases in the past 24 hours has taken India's number of coronavirus infections to 1,155,191.</p> <p>The Health Ministry on Tuesday also reported 587 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities to 28,084. The number of recoveries stand at 724,577.</p> <p>India's top medical research body, the Indian Council for Medical Research, has asked states to add more labs and increase testing capacity of the approved labs. A country of 1.4 billion people, India has been conducting nearly 10,000 tests per million population.</p> <p>With a surge in virus cases in the past few weeks, local state governments in India have been ordering focused lockdowns in high-risk areas to slow new infections.</p>

	Experts say India is likely to witness a series of peaks as the virus spreads in rural areas where the healthcare system is weak.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 EU sets \$2.1T budget, virus aid deal
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/eu-nations-clinch-21t-budget-virus-aid-deal-71889906
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS -- Weary but relieved, European Union leaders finally clinched a deal on an unprecedented 1.8 trillion-euro (\$2.1 trillion) budget and coronavirus recovery fund early Tuesday, somehow finding unity after four days and nights of fighting and wrangling over money and power in one of their longest summits ever.</p> <p>With masks and hygienic gel everywhere at the summit, the 27 leaders were constantly reminded of the potent medical and economic threat the virus poses to their continent, and grudgingly committed to a costly, massive aid package for those hit hardest by COVID-19.</p> <p>“Extraordinary events, and this is the pandemic that has reached us all, also require extraordinary new methods,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel said.</p> <p>To confront the biggest recession in its history, the EU will establish a 750 billion-euro coronavirus fund, partly based on common borrowing, to be sent as loans and grants to the hardest-hit countries. That comes on top of the seven-year, 1 trillion-euro EU budget that leaders had been haggling over for months even before the pandemic.</p> <p>“The consequences will be historic,” French President Emmanuel Macron said. “We have created a possibility of taking up loans together, of setting up a recovery fund in the spirit of solidarity,” a sense of sharing debt that would have been unthinkable not so long ago.</p> <p>Merkel said, “We have laid the financial foundations for the EU for the next seven years and came up with a response to this arguably biggest crisis of the European Union.”</p> <p>With Macron and Merkel negotiating as the closest of partners, the traditionally powerful Franco-German alliance struggled for days to get the quarreling nations in line. But, even walking out of a negotiating session in protest together over the weekend, the two leaders bided their time and played their cards right.</p> <p>“When Germany and France stand together, they can’t do everything. But if they don’t stand together, nothing is possible,” said Macron, challenging anyone in the world who criticized the days of infighting to think of a comparable joint endeavor.</p> <p>“There are 27 of us around the table and we managed to come up with a joint budget. What other political space in the world is capable of that? None other,” Macron said.</p> <p>At first, Merkel and Macron wanted the grants to total 500 billion euros, but the so-called “frugals” — five wealthy northern nations led by the Netherlands — wanted a cut in such spending and strict economic reform conditions imposed. The figure was brought down to 390 billion euros, while the five nations also got guarantees that grants had to be linked to economic reforms.</p> <p>“There is no such thing as perfection, but we have managed to make progress,” Macron said.</p> <p>The summit at the urn-shaped Europa Center laid bare how the nations’ narrow self-interests trumped the obvious common good for all to stand together and face a common adversary.</p> <p>Rarely had a summit been as ill-tempered as this one, and it was the longest since a five-day summit in Nice, France, in 2000, when safeguarding national interests in institutional reforms long was a stumbling block.</p>

	<p>“There were extremely tense moments,” Macron said.</p> <p>Still, considering every EU leader had the right of veto on the whole package, the joint commitment to invest and spend such funds could be seen as a success.</p> <p>The days and nights of brutal summiteering will surely have left many wounds between member states, but as history has proven, the EU has an uncanny gift to quickly produce scar tissue and move on.</p> <p>“We all can take a hit,” said Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte. “After all, there are presidents among us.”</p> <p>Despite bruising confrontations with Merkel, Macron and his Italian counterpart, Giuseppe Conte, Rutte maintained that “we have very good, warm relations.”</p> <p>Even if Tuesday’s agreement was a giant leap forward, the European Parliament, which has called the moves of the member states too timid considering the challenge, still has to approve the deal.</p> <p>But Tuesday was a moment to revel in the achievement itself. What was planned as a two-day summit scheduled to end Saturday was forced into two extra days by deep ideological differences among the 27 leaders.</p> <p>The coronavirus has sent the EU into a tailspin, killing around 135,000 of its citizens and plunging its economy into an estimated contraction of 8.3% this year.</p> <p>Rutte and others also wanted a link to be made between the handout of EU funds and the rule of law — a connection aimed at Poland and Hungary, countries with right-wing populist governments that many in the EU think are sliding away from democratic rule.</p> <p>In its conclusion, the European Council underlined the “importance of the respect of the rule of law” and said it will create a system of conditionality aimed at preventing member states from getting subsidies from the budget and recovery fund if they don’t abide by its principles.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Japan protests China survey ship
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/japan-protests-chinese-maritime-survey-off-southern-islets-71877334
GIST	<p>TOKYO -- Japan has protested to Beijing over a Chinese survey ship that operated for 10 days inside the exclusive economic zone claimed by Japan around Okinotorishima, a tiny island in the Pacific Ocean, officials said Monday.</p> <p>Japan says Okinotorishima — two uninhabited rocky outcroppings about 1,700 kilometers (1,060 miles) southwest of Tokyo — are islands. China says they are only rocks and do not qualify as a demarcation point for Japan's exclusive economic zone, as Japan claims under international law.</p> <p>Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters that coast guard officials spotted a Chinese ship using survey equipment in the waters beginning July 9 and ordered it to stop. The Chinese ship stayed in the area until Saturday and Japan protested to Beijing via diplomatic channels, Suga said.</p> <p>“We have not given permission to the Chinese side to conduct a maritime scientific survey in the waters,” Suga said. Japan says Okinotorishima anchors the country's EEZ under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, which requires foreign ships to gain prior consent to operate surveys or fishing.</p>

	<p>Just the tips of the small outcroppings are visible at high tide. They have been heavily enhanced by concrete embankments to avoid further erosion. A few years ago, Japanese fisheries officials planted corals around the outcroppings in an attempt to enlarge them.</p> <p>China does not dispute Japan's control over Okinotorishima, but has repeatedly criticized Tokyo's claim that it is an island.</p> <p>On Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said Okinotorishima is a reef under the U.N. convention, not an island, so Japan cannot use it to claim an EEZ. Hua said the Chinese survey ship was exercising freedom of scientific research on the high seas and Japan's permission was not needed.</p> <p>Japan and China have stepped up their territorial disputes recently.</p> <p>China has ramped up its claim to Japanese-controlled islands called Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in Chinese. It also has been asserting his claim to most of the South China Sea, parts of which are claimed by several other regional governments.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Bahamas bans US travelers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bahamas-bans-us-travelers-starting-wednesday-71881101
GIST	<p>HAVANA -- The Bahamas is banning travelers from the United States starting Wednesday after a surge in coronavirus infections followed the islands' reopening to international tourism.</p> <p>Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said Sunday that the country had seen 49 new coronavirus infections since it opened on July 1, nearly a third of the total of 153 cases seen on the island since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>Most of the islands' visitors come from the United States, many from Florida, which has high and climbing rates of infection from the novel coronavirus.</p> <p>"Regrettably, the situation here at home has already deteriorated since we began the reopening of our domestic economy," Minnis said. "It has deteriorated at an exponential rate since we reopened our international borders."</p> <p>Minnis said travelers from the United Kingdom, Europe and Canada will still be allowed to visit the Bahamas. Visitors and Bahamas citizens will need to present proof of negative results from a molecular COVID test upon entry.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Egypt approves Libya deployment
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypts-lawmakers-vote-deploying-troops-libya-71873091
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- Egypt's parliament on Monday authorized the deployment of troops outside the country, a move that could escalate the spiraling war in Libya after the president threatened military action against Turkish-backed forces in the oil-rich country.</p> <p>A troop deployment in Libya could bring Egypt and Turkey, close U.S. allies that support rival sides in the conflict, into direct confrontation.</p>

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi has called the strategic coastal city of Sirte a “red line” and warned that any attack on the city, which sits near Libya’s main oil-export terminals and fields, would prompt Egypt to intervene to protect its western border.

Turkish-backed forces allied with the U.N.-supported government in Tripoli, the capital, are mobilizing on the edges of Sirte and have vowed to retake the Mediterranean city, along with the inland Jufra airbase, from rival forces commanded by Khalifa Hifter and based in the east.

After a closed-door session in Cairo, Egypt’s House of Representatives, which is packed with supporters of el-Sissi, approved plans to send troops to “defend Egyptian national security in the strategic western direction against the actions of armed criminal militias and foreign terrorists.”

The size and nature of the military deployment was unclear.

Libya was plunged into chaos when a NATO-backed uprising in 2011 toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, who was later killed.

Drawn by Hifter’s anti-Islamist stance, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and other foreign powers have provided his forces with critical military assistance against western militias. Russia has also emerged as a key supporter of Hifter, sending hundreds of mercenaries through Wagner Group, a private military company.

Turkey, a bitter rival of Egypt in a broader regional struggle over political Islam, is the main patron of the Tripoli forces, which are also backed by the wealthy Gulf state Qatar.

“Egypt will spare no efforts to support the sister Libya ... to overcome the current critical crisis,” the Egyptian presidency said in a statement after a meeting of the National Defense Council on Sunday that was chaired by el-Sissi.

Egypt has been under pressure to act since the collapse this spring of Hifter’s 14-month campaign to oust the U.N.-supported government from the capital. Tripoli forces drove Hifter’s self-styled army from the capital’s suburbs, several western towns and a key airbase.

The string of victories provoked intense fears in Egypt, which sees a Turkish presence on its porous western border as a threat. Relations between the countries have steadily deteriorated since 2013, when el-Sissi led the military overthrow of Mohamed Morsi, an elected Islamist leader who enjoyed Turkey’s support.

Egypt’s state-run Al-Ahram daily reported on Sunday that the vote in parliament was intended to mandate el-Sissi to “intervene militarily in Libya to help defend the western neighbor against Turkish aggression.”

Libya’s east-based parliament, the sole elected body in the country, urged Egypt to send troops. Last week, el-Sissi hosted dozens of tribal leaders loyal to Hifter in Cairo, where he repeated that Egypt will “not stand idle in the face of moves that pose a direct threat to security.”

But el-Sissi has also pushed hard in recent weeks for a cease-fire and political settlement. The Egyptian military, which has for years steered clear of overseas adventures and focused on fighting Islamic militants in the Sinai Peninsula, may be wary of deep involvement in Libya’s chaotic conflict.

The “distinct possibility” of direct conflict between Egypt and Turkey, a NATO member, presents a “brand new headache for Washington,” said Jalel Harchaoui, a research fellow specializing in Libyan affairs at the Clingendael Institute, an independent think tank in the Netherlands.

The U.S. has sent mixed signals to the rival sides over the course of the war. Although increasingly concerned about Moscow’s growing influence in Libya, Washington “doesn’t want to articulate a real,

	<p>coherent Libya policy,” Harchaoui said, leaving a void that has allowed Russia and Turkey to become major players.</p> <p>In a call on Monday with U.S. President Donald Trump ahead of the parliament vote, el-Sissi said Egypt’s aim is to “prevent further deterioration of security in Libya,” according to a statement from the Egyptian presidential spokesman. It said the two leaders agreed on maintaining a cease-fire and avoiding a military escalation in Libya.</p> <p>Stephanie Williams, acting head of the U.N. support mission in Libya, on Monday also pushed the warring sides and their foreign backers to pull back from the brink, “to spare the 125,000 civilians who remain in harm’s way.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Syria: Israel air raids on capital
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-reports-suspected-israeli-air-raids-capital-71884526
GIST	<p>DAMASCUS, Syria -- The Syrian military said the country's air defenses responded on Monday to Israeli air raids in south Damascus that wounded seven soldiers and caused material damage, and residents said loud explosions rocked the capital.</p> <p>It was not clear what the targets were. The air raids, which came just before 10 p.m. (1900 GMT), continued for more than 15 minutes. Residents reported hearing at least four explosions in the capital.</p> <p>A military official quoted in Syrian state media said the attack was carried out by Israeli jets that took off from the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 war. The unnamed official said air defenses responded and downed most of the missiles. He said the attack wounded seven soldiers and caused material damage.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the country's civil war, said the suspected Israeli strikes targeted government and Iranian militia posts.</p> <p>Israel rarely comments on such reports, but is believed to have carried out scores of raids targeting Iran's military presence in Syria. In the past two months alone, Syria has accused Israel of carrying out at least eight air raids on its territory. The last reported strikes came in late June.</p> <p>Iran is a key ally of the Syrian government in the nearly decade-long civil war. Israel views Iran as a regional menace and has vowed to prevent any permanent Iranian military buildup in Syria, particularly near the frontier.</p> <p>In recent months, Israeli officials have also expressed concern that Hezbollah, an Iran-backed Lebanese militant group that operates in Syria, is trying to establish facilities to produce precision-guided missiles. Tensions have also risen along the Israel-Lebanon border.</p> <p>The strikes Monday came a day after Syrians voted in government-held areas to elect a new parliament. The vote is the third to take place in Syria since the civil war began in March 2011. It has killed more than 400,000, displaced half the country’s population and caused more than five million to become refugees, mostly in neighboring countries.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Hong Kong protesters skirt new law
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hong-kong-protesters-adapt-signs-slogans-skirt-law-71889054

HONG KONG -- It was one of the first protests in Hong Kong after a feared national security law came into effect.

Among a dozen or so lunchtime demonstrators at a luxury mall in the Central business district, a man raised a poster that — viewed from afar — read in Chinese, “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times.”

The government had just banned the slogan, saying it had separatist connotations and so ran afoul of the new security law's prohibition of secessionist acts.

Shortly after, riot police entered the mall, shooing away onlookers. They detained the man, telling him the slogan was banned. But when officers looked at the poster up close, no words could be made out. It merely had circular shapes against a contrasting background. They snapped a few photographs of the poster and let him go.

Since the imposition of the security law — which bans secessionist, subversive and terrorist activities, as well as collusion with foreign forces, with penalties of up to life imprisonment — anti-government protesters in Hong Kong, and those supporting the movement, have adapted their methods to try to make their voices heard without violating the legislation.

Before the law took effect June 30, protesters often held up colorful posters plastered with slogans that ranged from condemning the Chinese government to calling for Hong Kong's independence. Since then, they have become creative in obscuring their messages.

Many of the protesters at the luxury mall held up blank pieces of white paper to protest against China's “white terror” of political repression. Other posters are designed to circumvent bans on slogans. The government has not yet made clear if such forms of expression are illegal.

The law has had a chilling effect on “yellow shops” that support the protest movement. Many have removed protest artwork and sticky notes bearing words of encouragement from customers, out of fear that they could land them in trouble with the authorities.

Some shop owners, like Tan Wong, have instead put up blank sticky notes to show solidarity with the movement.

“We are doing this right now because (the shop) is private property. We are trying to tell Hong Kong people that this is the only thing that we ‘yellow shops’ can do,” said Wong, who runs Kok Kok Chicken, a Korean fried chicken store.

“If we do not persist, we would no longer be able to deliver our message to others,” he said.

Yu Yee Cafe, a Hong Kong-style diner that serves fast food, has covered its windows with blank sticky notes and even displays an origami figure of Winnie the Pooh, a playful taunt of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Chinese censors briefly banned social media searches for Winnie the Pooh in China after Xi's appearance was compared to the cartoon bear.

“I wonder if there's still rule of law if sticking a (blank) piece of paper on the wall is illegal,” said Eddie Tsui, one of the diner's customers. “It's just using a different way to express our demands. If you don't allow us to protest that way, we'll find another way.”

The use of blank paper or sticky notes to protest is a changing form of resistance, according to Ma Ngok, an associate professor of politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

“They put up blank notes so that even if the government wants to prosecute them, there is nothing that can be used against them,” he said.

	<p>Protesters in Hong Kong have also come up with alternative slogans to circumvent the ban on “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times.”</p> <p>Some users quote the initials of the romanization of the eight Chinese characters in the banned slogan — “GFHG, SDGM.” Others have changed the words entirely to terms that sound similar but mean very different things. One alternative slogan now reads “Patronize Hong Kong, Times Square,” a reference to a popular shopping mall in the city.</p> <p>A popular protest anthem, “Glory to Hong Kong,” has had some of its lyrics changed, with protesters replacing the words with numbers in Cantonese that sound approximately like the lyrics.</p> <p>The circumventing of bans on slogans is reminiscent of how mainland Chinese internet users come up with creative ways and similar-sounding words to talk about sensitive issues without triggering censorship under the “Great Firewall of China,” where censors delete posts containing sensitive terms and make such keywords unsearchable on online platforms.</p> <p>“There is a long history of censorship where we know that people will find ways to circumvent the system, no matter how you regulate,” said Fu King-wa, associate professor at the University of Hong Kong’s journalism school.</p> <p>“Sometimes, censorship can backfire, triggering more people to discuss an issue because they think that if it is censored, then it must be something important,” he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Promising early results Covid vaccine
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-19-vaccine-candidates-show-promising-early-results/story?id=71878984&cid=clicksource_4380645_2_heads_hero_live_hero_hed
GIST	<p>A flurry of research, newly released by multiple manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccine candidates, provides reassuring glimmers of hope that scientists are on track to develop an effective and safe vaccine at record speed.</p> <p>On Monday, three research groups separately released early positive results demonstrating that their respective COVID-19 experimental vaccines induced a multipronged immune response that may be important for long-term protection against infection.</p> <p>Those groups included the University of Oxford and its partner AstraZeneca, Pfizer and its partner BioNTech and the Chinese vaccine company CanSino Biologics. Last week, Moderna also released promising early data.</p> <p>Experts caution that these early studies, though promising, will need to be confirmed with larger Phase 3 trials, involving tens of thousands of people, to determine if any vaccine could be truly effective.</p> <p>According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are at least 23 COVID-19 vaccine candidates that have progressed to various stages of human studies. So far, several of these candidates have showed promising preliminary data from their early clinical trials, either in peer-reviewed journals, directly online to preprint servers or in press releases.</p> <p>On Monday, new data by Oxford-AstraZeneca, published in the journal The Lancet, suggested that the vaccine is relatively safe and induces an immune response to fight the novel coronavirus. All 1,077 volunteers who received the vaccine in the Phase 1/2 trial developed neutralizing antibodies against COVID-19. These specific antibodies are infection-fighting proteins produced by the body that may prevent the virus from infecting healthy cells. The vaccine also elicited a T-cell response to the virus: another method of defense used by the immune system to bolster protection and attack cells already infected by the virus.</p>

Professor Adrian Hill, director of Oxford's Jenner Institute, called the latest data very "encouraging" in an interview with ABC News, adding that experts are "seeing both arms of the immune systems stimulated very strongly by the vaccine."

Meanwhile, BioNTech and Pfizer also released results of a Phase 1/2 trial Monday. That study included 60 participants and showed that the vaccine induced both neutralizing antibody and T-cell responses. The results were published in a preprint server, meaning they have not yet undergone the normal scientific review process.

Also on Monday, CanSino Biologics released data in the Lancet that showed similar results. And last week, the U.S.-based company Moderna released data in the New England Journal of Medicine that also demonstrated this two-pronged effect of neutralizing antibodies and T-cell response.

Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, told ABC News that many of the vaccines with recently-published data look promising.

"Their Phase 1 data looks really good," Collins said, referring to [Oxford's vaccine](#). "I wouldn't say it looks distinctly better than what you see for the Moderna trial or the Pfizer trial. They all look good, which is really encouraging to see."

Collectively, these early studies indicate that all four vaccine candidates might confer immunity through multiple pathways to fight COVID-19, although experts caution that more research is still needed.

Dr. Paul Goepfert, director of the Alabama Vaccine Research Clinic at UAB, said that "distinguishing one vaccine candidate from another is very difficult at this point. They all induce about the same amount of responses. They all induce neutralizing antibody response, which is sort of the gold standard of protection for a lot of vaccines."

According to Goepfert, antibodies protect against infection, while T-cells -- especially a specific subtype known as killer T-cells -- attack previously-infected cells and are very good at preventing disease.

"So ideally, you want everything. The more the merrier," said Goepfert, "The more types of immune responses you can induce with the vaccine, and the higher amount, we think that's the best thing you can have."

But he warned that this is not always the case. Some effective and already widely-used vaccines, like the Hepatitis B vaccine, do not induce any killer T-cell response but are still highly effective.

Although the results reported this week are promising, it's still too early to predict which one of the vaccines will be the most effective. Early Phase 1 and Phase 2 studies mainly examine vaccine safety, tolerability and immune response, but Phase 3 trials will provide answers to these much-anticipated questions about efficacy.

Even Hill admitted that the Oxford team still doesn't have the data to determine how well their vaccine will actually work. "The truth is that we don't know when we'll have a final result or how well the vaccine works," Hill said. "It's likely to be months. We were aiming for September, October... I still think that's a realistic aspiration but we can't be certain."

When it comes to large Phase 3 studies, Oxford is slightly ahead of the pack, having already enrolled over 10,000 people in Brazil, South America, the U.K. and, soon, in the U.S.

"We're aiming to vaccinate, in total, around about 50,000 people over the coming months, so that's promising, but you know it's not really a race against other vaccines, it's a race against time," Hill added. "But at the moment we're probably ahead in terms of Phase 3 trials and hoping to get a result certainly this year."

Among European and North American vaccine efforts, [Moderna is following right behind](#), scheduled to begin its Phase 3 trials next week. Similarly, Pfizer-BioNTech is on track to launch its Phase 2/3 trial later this month.

Among Chinese companies, two have already begun Phase 3 trials: Sinovac and Sinopharm. According to CanSino Biologics' executive director, Qiu Dongxu, the company is expected to begin [Phase 3 trials](#) "soon," but a clear start date is yet to be publicly released.

Biopharmaceutical companies across the world have now pivoted their efforts to primarily support the development of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines. Progress has been made at record speeds, and during an unprecedented time, the U.S. government is taking unprecedented measures, ramping up the development of some of these vaccines before even confirming their efficacy.

According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease doctor, "If everything works out the way we hope and we don't get any unpredictable potholes and bumps in the road, we should know, as we get into the mid to late fall, early winter, probably late fall, whether we have candidates that really are safe and effective."

Many scientists and researchers have been working nonstop for the past six months to find a vaccine against COVID-19.

"We feel that there's urgency and pressure really every day," Hill said. "People are working day and night and we're not going to stop until we get an answer."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Blackbaud admits paying ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/cloud-company-blackbaud-pays-ransomware-operators-avoid-data-leak?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Cloud software provider Blackbaud has admitted that it paid cybercriminals to regain control of data following a ransomware attack in May 2020.</p> <p>The company, which is known for its fundraising suites aimed at educational institutions and charities, offers a diverse portfolio of management and payment services to help process donations and fundraises.</p> <p>Last week, the company published a notice on a ransomware attack that it fell victim to in May 2020, claiming that it was able to discover and stop the assault, but not before some data was exfiltrated by the attackers.</p> <p>“Our Cyber Security team—together with independent forensics experts and law enforcement—successfully prevented the cybercriminal from blocking our system access and fully encrypting files; and ultimately expelled them from our system. Prior to our locking the cybercriminal out, the cybercriminal removed a copy of a subset of data from our self-hosted environment,” the company said.</p> <p>According to Blackbaud, the attackers did not access credit card data, bank account information or the social security numbers of its customers.</p> <p>Even so, the company decided to pay the cybercriminals for deleting the data that was exfiltrated during the incident, “with confirmation that the copy they removed had been destroyed.”</p>

	<p>“Based on the nature of the incident, our research, and third party (including law enforcement) investigation, we have no reason to believe that any data went beyond the cybercriminal, was or will be misused; or will be disseminated or otherwise made available publicly,” the company said.</p> <p>The company’s public cloud environment, which lies in Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services, and most of the company’s self-hosted environment weren’t affected in the security incident.</p> <p>Blackbaud also mentioned that it has notified the customers who were affected by the attack, but did not provide specific information on how the attackers were able to compromise its systems in the first place.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Cyber against granny
SOURCE	https://www.informationsecuritybuzz.com/articles/cyber-against-granny/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Every year, cybercriminals steal approximately \$40 billion from older adults (senior citizens aged 60 and over) in the United States. Cybercrime can be defined as “any criminal activity in which a computer (or networked device) is targeted and/or used.” Cybercriminals with access to an older adult person’s information via a computer, smartphone, or other networked device, can easily exploit it for nefarious intent, defined as “<i>an act of forcing, compelling, or exerting undue influence over a vulnerable adult causing the vulnerable adult to act in a way that is inconsistent with relevant past behavior or causing the vulnerable adult to perform services for the benefit of another</i>”.</p> <p>The scope of bad actors targeting senior citizens can be explained by the lack of experience and skills in using computers/technology among the elderly, against the growing popularity of computer systems held by people of the same age, and the fact that most of them have credit cards.</p> <p>In the past, people in their 70s and 80s hardly ever used computers. Nowadays, people of the same age have social media accounts, surf the Internet, and of course use smartphones.</p> <p>Unlike their younger counterparts, seniors are less aware of cyber threats and, in many cases, lack the tools and experience to identify attacks and fraudulent attempts. Even elderly people with no access to computers or smartphones can fall victim to cyber-related crime such as in the case where their personal details have been leaked from a database and sold to criminals who can then exploit. Seniors also give bad actors the highest hit rates from phone phishing scams with frequent attempts being compromise of personal information and news of harm/captivity of the elderly’s children.</p> <p>Most of the crimes against the adult population use a similar pattern as fraud against the elderly with no connection to computers (such as telemarketing of unnecessary services by highly aggressive sales reps).</p> <p>The criminals will reach out to those people in a non-suspicious manner – sending a legitimate-looking email, offering to connect on Facebook or by using a legitimate website that offers them some vacation or other prize. The criminals will then try to obtain the details of those people. In particular, they will seek credit card and identification details that allow them to use these cards. Another tactic is impersonating a person in need and requesting a transfer of funds.</p> <p>Recently, the FBI arrested a network of criminals impersonating other people (Captain Garcia of the US military stationed in Syria, for example) who then persuaded their victims – many of whom were elderly – to transfer money to various causes, all of which were fictitious.</p> <p>Another favorite method of criminals is impersonating “official” entities – government officials, municipalities and various authorities, while exploiting the trust (or innocence) of those veteran citizens and fraudulently obtaining their details.</p> <p>In addition, this population is exposed to “normal” cybercrime – phishing, infection by malware and theft of personal information. The only difference is that the likelihood of this population recognizing such an</p>

attack is extremely slim, as the ability of people in this age group to understand that they have been compromised and to seek assistance is minimal. It should be noted that such attacks can also be carried out against people through their smartphones, which are very popular with this age group. These devices are usually not installed with protection software that could alert the user to malicious websites or warn them of attempts to exfiltrate personal details from the device.

What can be done?

It all starts and ends with education, but this time it is the younger generation which needs to educate their parents. We should remember the warnings they repeatedly told us when we were younger, and echo similar messages back to them, though in a slightly different way:

- Know your friends and enemies: [research](#) shows that the elderly are oblivious to cyber risks, so it's worthwhile explaining to them some basic concepts and providing them with some examples of criminal or fraudulent online activities for them to learn from and avoid.
- Do not open the door to strangers, and do not receive anything from strangers: Any communication from a party that they do not know personally should be treated with caution. It's wise to assume all profiles on social networks are fake until proven otherwise.
- Don't tell anyone any personal information – even if you are convinced that you are in contact with an official, or a real person – do not provide credit card details, residential address or social security number – certainly not by email or messenger.
- If there is any suspicion, call “a responsible adult” – if requests are made to provide contact information, it is advisable to consult a person who is well-versed in security to see that the site is genuine. Yes, that person could be your 13-year-old grandson!
- If something looks too good to be true, it's probably not true – this old adage is just as true in the online world as it is in the physical world. Resist those tempting offers that pop up while browsing for weird apps that install themselves on the mobile device, and avoid those people who offer big, congested “if only” details or who to send you money.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, today's elderly will continue to be the victims of cybercrime. This phenomenon will likely become worse before getting better as more elderly dabble in technology their generation adopts digital means of payment and banking through smartphones. It will probably take years until the generation who “grew up using computers” come of age, and are immune to such scams with their decades of built-in experience and suspicion of every poor girl from Nigeria who needs a hundred dollars a month to buy dresses for school. Until then, watch out for your parents, and help guard them against those they cannot guard against themselves.

[Return to
Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Gates Foundation impersonated in scam
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/bill-melinda-gates-foundation-bitcoin-phishing-scam/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>The importance of such Bitcoin phishing scams has increased due to the massive Twitter accounts hack spree on July 15th, 2020.</p> <p>A couple of days ago, we covered a massive hack on Twitter that had taken over official accounts of various celebrities including but not limited to BillGates, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk. Turns out though, beyond Twitter, there's another dimension that hasn't been exposed yet.</p> <p>Reported by Area 1 Security, an email phishing campaign has been discovered in which the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is being impersonated with messages demanding Bitcoin being sent out. The messages closely resemble that of the Twitter hack with an attractive quick rich scheme offer.</p> <p>To increase their chances of success, the malicious actors employed typosquatting technique and registered a domain nearly identical to the original domain of the foundation a few minutes before starting the campaign.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Spelled out as gatesfoundation[.]com; the “l” after the “t” could indeed not be recognized unless someone looked very carefully.</p> <p>Furthermore, the researchers state that “the attacker also set up an SPF record for the domain in order to ensure reliable delivery of their attack”. This may have led someone unsuspecting to fall for the scam.</p> <p>Coming to the root problem, on the other hand, the domain was registered using Namecheap which brings us to a critical question, why can’t domain registrars do more to fight against typosquatting?</p> <p>While the law may not require them to make all domain names comply with trademark regulations, they on their own initiative could lock access to any addresses that closely resemble distinctive brands or organizations such as the Gates Foundation in this case. In this way, legitimate firms can only purchase them solving a huge problem in the cybersecurity industry.</p> <p>Good news, for now, is that at the time of publishing this article the malicious domain was offline. Moreover, a look at the scammer’s Bitcoin address (18XJzrgPqYhKKeR2j4vz6wPQorK3sNuNxs), no one has fallen for the scam.</p> <p>To conclude, web users are advised to firstly never pay any amount whatsoever through an unofficial challenge as no reputable company or foundation demands so. Secondly, carefully assess any domain names before giving out your information – time-consuming – but pays in the long run. Lastly, if it sounds too good to be true – a cliché – it may indeed not be true.</p>
-------------------------------	---

HEADLINE	07/20 Exposed: 1M online student records
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/one-million-online-student-records/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Nearly one million records containing the personal information of online students have been leaked after cloud misconfigurations by five e-learning platforms, according to WizCase.</p> <p>The VPN comparison site found four misconfigured and unencrypted AWS S3 buckets and one unsecured Elasticsearch server, compromising the details of countless e-learners, including many children, as well as their parents and teachers.</p> <p>The personal information (PII) exposed included full names, home and email addresses, ID numbers, phone numbers, dates of birth and course/school information.</p> <p>WizCase warned users of potential follow-on identity fraud, phishing attacks, stalking and blackmail. “As many users whose data was leaked aren’t active on the sites anymore, they’re less likely to realize these companies still have their information,” it added.</p> <p>“However, it’s still possible that their data can be used to aid in various types of online crimes. These dangers are even bigger since many of the users affected by the leaks are children and young people.”</p> <p>The affected companies include Escola Digital, a Brazilian site that leaked 15MB of data, amounting to 75,000 records, although many came from 2016 and 2017.</p> <p>South African site MyTopDog exposed over 800,000 records via a misconfigured S3 bucket, including documents related to business partner Vodacom School.</p> <p>Kazakhstan-based Okoo leaked 7200 records via an Elasticsearch server, while US sites Square Panda (15,000) and Playground Sessions (4100) round-out the affected platforms.</p>

	<p>WizCase urged users who may have had their data exposed in this way to regularly check for unusual activity on their accounts, to be extra cautious when receiving unsolicited emails and never to give out PII over the phone.</p> <p>These incidents are widespread across virtually all industries, although the online learning sector has been booming of late thanks to COVID-related school closures across much of the world.</p> <p>Earlier this month, WizCase revealed five dating apps in the US and Asia that had exposed millions of customer records through misconfigured Elasticsearch servers, MongoDB databases and AWS buckets.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/19 European Space Agency site defaced again
SOURCE	https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/106111/hacking/esa-site-defaced-again.html?web_view=true
GIST	<p>A group of hackers that goes online with the name Ghost Squad Hackers has defaced for the second time in a week a site of the European Space Agency (ESA).</p> <p>Last week a group of hackers that goes online with the name Ghost Squad Hackers announced the defacement of a site of the European Space Agency (ESA), https://business.esa.int/.</p> <p>Now the group contacted me again to report a second hack of a website of the European Space Agency. This time the hackers compromised the website of https://space4rail.esa.int/index.html, it is the second defacement in a few days suffered by the ESA.</p> <p>Ghost Squad Hackers told me that they have found for the second time in a few days a Server-side request forgery (SSRF) remote code execution vulnerability in the server of the agency. This time they have exploited the issue to gain access to the https://space4rail.esa.int domain and deface it.</p> <p>A Server-side request forgery (also known as SSRF) is a web security vulnerability that allows an attacker to induce the server-side application to make HTTP requests to an arbitrary domain of the attacker's choosing.</p> <p>In typical SSRF examples, the attacker might cause the server to make a connection back to itself, or to other web-based services within the organization's infrastructure, or to external third-party systems.</p> <p>A successful SSRF attack can often result in unauthorized actions or access to data within the organization, either in the vulnerable application itself or on other back-end systems that the application can communicate with. In some situations, the SSRF vulnerability might allow an attacker to perform arbitrary command execution.</p> <p><i>"We again found the same private vulnerability in their servers leading to RCE (SSRF to RCE). After gaining access to their servers we decided to deface yet another domain for laughs. Their attempt to patch the vulnerability was a fail even after removing their CMS and adding a maintenance index we were still able to get access. We didn't contact them this time either, instead decided to deface another domain." the hackers told me.</i></p> <p><i>"These space agencies are not safe and we will continue to prove that!"</i></p> <p>According to the hackers, the ESA experts have yet to fix the problem, they only removed the installation of the CMS.</p> <p>The hackers told me that the issue was not within the CMS/web application, but it affects service in execution on the server.</p>

	<p><i>"It seems they took the vulnerable service down also, this is their attempt to prevent future cyber attacks." the hackers said.</i></p> <p>The group claims to have hacked numerous organizations and government agencies over the years, including US military, European Union, Washington DC, Israeli Defense Forces, the Indian Government, and some central banks.</p> <p>The team appears to be focused primarily on operations against governmental agencies.</p> <p>The hacktivist remarked that they did not act for political reasons, they also highlighted that they had no interest in leaking any data.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/18 Rise in sextortion online
SOURCE	https://cybernews.com/privacy/the-rise-in-sextortion-online/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>As the coronavirus pandemic has spread throughout the world, cybercriminals have been taking advantage of the chaos to increase activity and find novel ways to wreak havoc on the world. Hacking and ransomware attacks are all up, but perhaps one of the lesser-known forms of cyberattack has also been on the increase.</p> <p>As millions of people around the world were confined to their homes as a result of state-issued guidance to half the spread of the virus, porn networks responded by opening up their archives for free to users. In response, Pornhub reported an 18% increase in traffic, with spikes typically coming hot on the heels of social distancing measures being introduced.</p> <p>Sex-related crime</p> <p>It should perhaps come as no surprise, therefore, that incidents of sextortion are also on the rise. New research from Michigan State University reveals that it has increased significantly during the last few months, with the lockdown playing a major part in the rise.</p> <p>Sextortion is when intimate images or videos are captured without the permission of the individual, and those images are then used to extort money from the victim. Why the increase in pornographic viewing during the lockdown makes us particularly vulnerable to this kind of extortion is that it doesn't necessarily require the attackers to actually have intimate images of us. The mere risk that such images may have been taken without our knowledge is often enough to encourage victims to pay up. Attackers are tapping into the fear of not knowing whether the threat is a real one or not.</p> <p>The researchers believe that society's focus on issues such as revenge porn, where laws are generally pretty robust, may encourage us to overlook the potential risks associated with sextortion, and they urge legislators to ensure that current regulations also take account of this burgeoning form of cybercrime.</p> <p>They suggest that the basis for our fear stems from the notion that hackers are capable of doing all manner of things, whether that's viewing our browsing history, hacking into our smart speaker, or capturing our webcam. People believe all of these things are possible, and often possible without their knowledge, which makes the risk of sextortion so visceral as we lack the ability to truly gauge whether an attacker is bluffing or not.</p> <p>The embarrassment factor also plays a part, with men less likely to report such crimes to the police than women, not only due to the shame associated with intimate images being in the public domain, but also their pornographic habits being investigated.</p> <p>As such, the research reveals that the most common victims of such attacks are minors and females, but when money is the key objective of the attacker, they usually target men who often just want the issue to go away as quickly and as quietly as possible.</p>

Different forms of extortion

The analysis revealed four distinct forms of extortion:

1. Attacks targeted at people under the age of 18
2. Attacks utilizing computer hacking
3. Attacks involving those known to us, which usually means current or former romantic partners
4. Attacks the target strangers, usually for financial reasons

Each of these four forms of sextortion has very different approaches and motivations. They also occur in differing frequencies, with the study revealing that 46% of victims of sextortion were minors, which the researchers believe should encourage law enforcement agencies to target their efforts in this area.

They reveal that the increasing activity of young people online has led to laws being drafted to protect them from sexual solicitation online, but few legal protections exist for adult victims. As our sex lives move increasingly online, the researchers are also seeing a growing range of cases emerging.

For instance, sextortion is increasingly being deployed in a domestic violence context, with partners who had previously shared images consensually then being blackmailed by partners who are using the images as leverage. It's also a growing commercial enterprise, with businesses emerging to trick people into engaging in webcam sessions and then threatening to release the footage unless a ransom is paid.

While the researchers urge lawmakers to toughen up regulations, they also urge education efforts to be increased so that people, and especially minors, are aware of the risks and act safely online.

"As digital citizens, we have to start advocating for more accountability on behalf of platforms to take these images down, or to report harassment," they write. "A lot of offline crimes have an online component, and oftentimes law enforcement and our behavior don't catch up. We need to think about our own personal safety, both offline and online."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 BadPower attack corrupts fast chargers
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/badpower-attack-corrupts-fast-chargers-to-melt-or-set-your-device-on-fire/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Chinese security researchers said they can alter the firmware of fast chargers to cause damage to connected (charging) systems, such as melt components, or even set devices on fire.</p> <p>The technique, named BadPower, was detailed last week in a report published by Xuanwu Lab, a research unit of Chinese tech giant Tencent.</p> <p>According to researchers, BadPower works by corrupting the firmware of fast chargers -- a new type of charger that was developed in the past few years to speed up charging times.</p> <p>A fast charger looks like any typical charger but works using special firmware. This firmware "talks" to a connected device and negotiates a charging speed, based on the device's capabilities.</p> <p>If a fast-charging feature is not supported, the fast charger delivers the standard 5V, but if the device can handle bigger inputs, the fast charger can deliver up to 12V, 20V, or even more, for faster charging speeds.</p> <p>The BadPower technique works by altering the default charging parameters to deliver more voltage than the receiving device can handle, which degrades and damages the receiver's components, as they heat up, bend, melt, or even burn.</p> <p>BADPOWER ATTACK IS SILENT AND FAST</p>

A BadPower attack is silent, as there are no prompts or interactions the attacker needs to go through, but also fast, as the threat actor only needs to connect their attack rig to the fast charger, wait a few seconds, and leave, having modified the firmware.

Furthermore, on some fast charger models, the attacker doesn't need special equipment, and researchers say the attack code can also be loaded on regular smartphones and laptops.

When the user connects their infected smartphone or laptop to the fast charger, the malicious code modifies the charger's firmware, and going forward the fast charger will execute a power overload for any subsequently connected devices.

The damage caused by a BadPower attack usually varies depending on the fast charger model and its charging capabilities, but also on the charged device and its protections.

RESEARCHERS TESTED 35 FAST CHARGERS, FOUND 18 VULNERABLE

The Tencent team said they verified their BadPower attack in practice. Researchers said they selected 35 fast chargers from 234 models available on the market and found that 18 models from 8 vendors were vulnerable.

The good news is that "most BadPower problems can be fixed by updating the device firmware."

The bad news is that the research team also analyzed 34 fast-charging chips, around which the fast charger models had been built. Researchers said that 18 chip vendors did not ship chips with a firmware update option, meaning there was no way to update the firmware on some fast charger chips.

Tencent researchers said they notified all affected vendors about their findings, but also the Chinese National Vulnerabilities Database (CNVD), in an attempt to accelerate the development and promotion of relevant security standards to protect against BadPower attacks.

Suggestions to fix the BadPower problem include hardening firmware to prevent unauthorized modifications, but also deploying overload protection to charged devices.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Number of reported breaches decrease
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/number-of-reported-breaches-decrease-in-first-half-of-2020/d-d-id/1338392?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>According to new research, a rising rate of coronavirus infections has been met with a declining rate of reported cybersecurity breaches. The finding, from the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC), shows that publicly reported US data breaches dropped 33% in the first half of 2020 compared with the first half of 2019.</p> <p>The ITRC sees significant drops in two of the three primary sources of breaches: Insider threats and third-party contractors have seen substantially lower numbers, while those from external threat actors are down but by a smaller margin.</p> <p>The number of publicly reported breaches in 2020 is on track to be the fewest since 2015, says the ITRC, which also cautions it expects numbers to rise once again when the pandemic has run its course.</p>
Return to Top	<i>Read more here.</i>

HEADLINE	07/20 Decline in insecure network services
----------	---

SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/risk/internet-scan-shows-decline-in-insecure-network-services-/d/d-id/1338395
GIST	<p>A comprehensive study of Internet-connected devices conducted over nearly four weeks in late March and early April shows that organizations surprisingly have become better about not exposing the most insecure services to the Internet.</p> <p>Rapid7 today released a massive 165-page report on the state of security on the Net that found easy-to-exploit protocols — such as server message block (SMB), file transfer protocol (FTP), and telnet — have declined anywhere from 2% to 16%, despite the move to remote work after the start of the coronavirus pandemic, according to Rapid7's National/Industry/Cloud Exposure Report (NICER). Given that Asia and Europe were firmly in lockdowns and the United States had just started entering its own lockdown, the researchers expected a lot more chaos.</p> <p>The Internet's security situation has definitely improved, says Tod Beardsley, director of research for Rapid7. "We saw a fairly large drop in SMB and telnet, our favorite vulnerable punching bags — things that you should never, ever, ever put on the Internet," he says. "So, at least structurally, on a protocol and service basis, the Internet seems to be going in the right direction, which was surprising to us."</p> <p>But a great deal of security problems continue to be apparent, Rapid7 found. Most organizations continue to delay patches, with 3.6 million SSH servers apparently running software version that are between 5- and 14-years old, the report found. More websites continue to offer the insecure HTTP protocol, rather than enforcing encrypted connections.</p> <p>For most protocols, millions of servers are running vulnerable versions of software or configured to allow the use of no encryption. Often, the infrastructure seems to be left vulnerable through neglect, the report stated. More than 3 million databases allow unencrypted queries, while nearly 3 million networking devices — such as routers and switches — accept unencrypted telnet connections.</p> <p>"The internet is not an automatic money- and culture-generating machine," the report stated. "It depends on the heroic efforts of thousands and thousands of professionals who are committed to its well-being, even in the face of daily attacks from a wide array of technically savvy criminals and spies."</p> <p>The report also measured every country and industry based on the relative security of their Internet endpoints. Using a measure of vulnerable attack-surface area consisting of the number of Internet addresses, vulnerable software at those addresses, and the total number of vulnerabilities found in a specific device, Rapid7 created a measure of relative vulnerability for each country and industry.</p> <p>The United States and China sit at the top of the chart, which is unsurprising, given that the two countries own a great deal of Internet address space.</p> <p>"With more endpoints, you have more chances to fail, because you have more patches you have to keep up with," Beardsley says.</p> <p>Rapid7 also graded each industry for its relative security posture, by combining the number of endpoints exposed with the number of vulnerabilities detected per endpoint. The aerospace and auto-parts manufacturing industries made top marks for security, while telecommunications, financial services, and healthcare sat at the bottom of the grading chart.</p> <p>The majority of instances of insecure protocols occurred in vulnerable versions of the Apache Web server, which for many organizations may represent an embedded server on a network appliance or other device. More than 80% of these vulnerable devices were more the three years old, Rapid7 says.</p> <p>The company argued that well-informed policy makers could help companies better secure their systems by issuing guidance on insecure protocols, share threat information about known weak protocols with other countries, and study how such protocols can affect national economies.</p>

	"Overall, what we are finding is that businesses are slowly going in the right direction," Beardsley says. "The distribution is pretty lumpy, some countries are doing things better than other countries. There is work to be done here."
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Maryland health firm reveals cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/lorien-health-services-discloses-ransomware-attack-affecting-nearly-50-000/
GIST	<p>Lorien Health Services in Maryland announced that it was the victim of a ransomware incident in early June. Data was stolen and then encrypted during the incident.</p> <p>Responsible for the attack are Netwalker ransomware operators, who leaked the information after Lorien refused to pay the ransom demand.</p> <p>Social Security numbers accessed A family-owned nursing home for the elders, Lorien Health Services runs nine locations in Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties, as well as a rehabilitation and fitness facility.</p> <p>The company says that the incident was detected on June 6 and contracted services of cybersecurity experts to start an investigation and determine the impact.</p> <p>After four days, the verdict was that personal information had been accessed by the hackers and it "may have included residents' names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, and health diagnosis and treatment information." Employee data was also accessed.</p> <p>According to the breach notification sent to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the number of impacted individuals is 47,754.</p> <p>Although Lorien just announced the breach publicly, Netwalker operators made the incident known in mid-June, publishing screenshots of directory listings with 2020 date stamps and admission records as proof of compromise.</p> <p>Netwalker leaks Lorien data At the moment, some of the data has been dumped online. A password-protected archive of 147MB is currently available via a file-sharing service.</p> <p>The hackers also published the unlock key for the archive and labeled this cache "Part 1," indicating that they may leak more data in the future.</p> <p>Netwalker ransomware operation started under the name Mailto in October 2019 and rebranded in February this year.</p> <p>Their targets include corporate networks vulnerable to remote desktop hacks but as the Lorien incident shows, they are not picky about who they attack as long as they get paid.</p> <p>As it typically happens with these attacks, the business informed the FBI and is cooperating with the service providing details that may help catch the perpetrators.</p> <p>Lorien sent notification letters to "all potentially impacted residents" on June 16, two days after the hackers announced a successful attack. The letters included details about the attack and the options for protecting personal information, along with complimentary credit monitoring and identity protection services.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Emotet-TrickBot malware duo is back
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/emotet-trickbot-malware-duo-is-back-infecting-windows-machines/
GIST	<p>After awakening last week and starting to send spam worldwide, Emotet is now once again installing the TrickBot trojan on infected Windows computers.</p> <p>On July 17th, 2020, after over five months of inactivity, the Emotet Trojan woke up and started massive spam campaigns pretending to be payment reports, invoices, shipping information, and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Current Emotet campaign These spam emails contain malicious documents that will install the Emotet trojan on the recipient's computer when opened and macros enabled.</p> <p>Historically, once a user became infected with Emotet, the trojan would eventually download and install the TrickBot trojan on the infected computer.</p> <p>It wasn't until today, though, that Binary Defense researcher James Quinn told BleepingComputer that he began to see Emotet once again installing the TrickBot trojan.</p> <p>TrickBot and why it is so dangerous TrickBot is an advanced malware that infects Windows machines and is commonly seen targeting enterprise networks.</p> <p>What makes TrickBot so dangerous is that it will download modules that perform various malicious activities on an infected computer.</p> <p>This activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attempting to spread laterally through a network ▪ Steal Active Directory Services databases ▪ Harvest login credentials and cookies from browsers ▪ Steal OpenSSH keys ▪ Steals RDP, VNC, and Putty credentials ▪ Steals banking credentials <p>Even worse, though, once TrickBot has finished harvesting anything of value from a compromised network, it will open up a reverse shell to the Ryuk and Conti Ransomware actors.</p> <p>This reverse shell will allow the ransomware operators to access the network, steal unencrypted files, and then deploy their ransomware to encrypt all of the network's machines.</p> <p>Network and security administrators need to be sure users on their network are educated adequately on Emotet spam campaigns and not open any suspicious documents.</p> <p>Furthermore, if a computer becomes compromised by Emotet, likely, they are also compromised by TrickBot.</p> <p>A full investigation should be launched, which includes assessing whether the infections have spread to other computers on the network.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Coinbase blocked Twitter hackers \$280K
----------	--

SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/coinbase-blocked-twitter-hackers-from-stealing-an-extra-280k/
GIST	<p>Coinbase says that it was able to block its customers from sending approximately \$280,000 to the Twitter hackers who, last week, took over high-profile accounts to push a massive bitcoin scam.</p> <p>The US-based cryptocurrency exchange, home to over 35 million users from 100 countries, blacklisted the Bitcoin addresses used by the scammers within minutes after the attack started.</p> <p>By doing that, Coinbase prevented roughly 1,000 users from getting scammed and sending 30.4 bitcoins to the Twitter hackers' wallets.</p> <p>"We noticed within about a minute of the Gemini and Binance tweets," Coinbase Chief Information Security Officer Philip Martin told Forbes.</p> <p>Compared to the total number of people using the crypto exchange for buying, selling, and storing cryptocurrency, "[i]t was a vanishingly small group of Coinbase users that tried to send bitcoin to the scam address," Martin added.</p> <p>Even with the Bitcoin addresses blacklisted almost right after the scam started making rounds around Twitter, 14 Coinbase users were still able to transfer roughly \$3,000 to the attacker-controlled address.</p> <p>Without Coinbase's quick reaction, the attackers would have got their hands on almost \$400,000 increasing their "profit" four-fold from the almost \$120,000 worth of bitcoins they managed to scam out of their victims during the attack.</p> <p>Twitter said after investigating the attack that hackers targeted 130 Twitter accounts after getting their hands on the credentials of a number of employees and gaining access to tools only available to Twitter internal support teams.</p> <p>The Twitter accounts of multiple tech companies including @Apple and @Uber, several tech executives, celebrities, and politicians such as @JeffBezos, @BarackObama, @elon_musk, @kanyewest, @JoeBiden, @BillGates, and @WarrenBuffett, and crypto exchanges including @coinbase, @Gemini, and @binance are just a small sample of the 130 ones used by the hackers to promote their Bitcoin scam.</p> <p>"For 45 of those accounts, the attackers were able to initiate a password reset, login to the account, and send Tweets," the company added. "In addition, we believe they may have attempted to sell some of the usernames."</p> <p>"For up to eight of the Twitter accounts involved, the attackers took the additional step of downloading the account's information through our 'Your Twitter Data' tool," none of these being verified accounts.</p> <p>After detecting the attack, Twitter immediately blocked the hijacked accounts from tweeting and resetting their user passwords.</p> <p>Three hours later, Twitter restored tweeting functionality to the affected accounts but stated that it might still become unavailable during the ongoing investigation.</p> <p>The company also said that it found no evidence of the intruders gaining access to the accounts' passwords and that they will not be reset.</p> <p>Twitter is continuing the forensic review of all accounts targeted in last week's attack, as well as the investigation and cooperation with law enforcement.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 Genealogy software maker exposes data
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/genealogy-software-maker-exposes/
GIST	<p>A US tech company that manages popular family tree software has exposed tens of thousands of its users' personal information online via a misconfigured cloud server, according to researchers.</p> <p>A team from WizCase led by Avishai Efrat discovered the unsecured Elasticsearch server leaking 25GB of data linked to users of the Family Tree Maker software.</p> <p>First released in 1989, it has had numerous corporate owners, including Broderbund, The Learning Company, Mattel and Ancestry.com, prior to Software MacKiev which is currently in charge of the code. WizCase informed the US software company of the incident and, although it didn't receive a reply, the incident was apparently remediated shortly after.</p> <p>Among the details leaked to the public-facing internet were email addresses, geolocation data, IP addresses, system user IDs, support messages and technical details.</p> <p>WizCase warned that a hacker could have used the information to craft convincing follow-on phishing attacks and identity fraud.</p> <p>It also claimed the leaked comments and complaints could have given MacKiev's competitors an opportunity to target unhappy customers, while technical details could be utilized in a different way.</p> <p>"The leak exposed technical details about the system's backend, which could help attackers leverage multiple cyber-attacks on Software MacKiev and its associated companies," it was claimed.</p> <p>"That way cyber-criminals can steal additional user data, infect the system with malware or even take complete control over parts of the systems."</p> <p>MacKiev is said to have developed the macOS version of Family Tree Maker since around 2010, and bought the Windows version of the software from Ancestry in 2016.</p> <p>Some 60,000 users are thought to have been exposed in this privacy snafu.</p> <p>It's one of many such incidents resulting from configuration errors on internet-connected computing resources. Last week, WizCase disclosed similar issues in multiple e-learning platforms exposing nearly one million records.</p> <p>Research from earlier this month found the same misconfigurations put the security and privacy of countless users of global dating apps at risk.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	07/20 BlackRock: new strain banking malware
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/analysts-detect-new-banking/
GIST	<p>A new strain of banking malware dubbed BlackRock has been detected by researchers at Threat Fabric. An investigation into its origins has revealed BlackRock to be derived from the Xerxes banking malware. Xerxes was in turn spawned out of the LokiBot Android banking Trojan, first detected around four years ago.</p> <p>The source code of the Xerxes malware was made public by its author around May 2019, making it possible for any threat actor to get their hands on it. Despite the code's availability, researchers found that the only Android banking Trojan based on Xerxes' source code that is currently operating appears to be BlackRock.</p>

This malevolent malware steals credentials not only from banking apps but also from other apps designed to facilitate communication, shopping and business. In total, the team found 337 Android apps were impacted, including dating, social networking and cryptocurrency apps.

By throwing their nefarious campaign net so wide, researchers believe the malware's creators are attempting to exploit the increase in online socializing brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19.

"Technical aspects aside, one of the interesting differentiators of BlackRock is its target list; it contains an important number of social, networking, communication and dating applications," noted researchers.

"So far, many of those applications haven't been observed in target lists for other existing banking Trojans. It therefore seems that the actors behind BlackRock are trying to abuse the growth in online socializing that increased rapidly in the last months due to the pandemic situation."

BlackRock was first spotted back in May 2020. When the malware is launched on a device for the first time, its icon is hidden from the app drawer, making it invisible to the end user. The malware then asks the victim for the Accessibility Service privileges, often posing as a Google update.

Once the user grants the request, BlackRock starts granting itself the additional permissions required for the bot to fully function without having to interact any further with the victim. When done, the bot is functional and ready to receive commands from the C2 server and perform the overlay attacks.

"Unfortunately, this malware is particularly sophisticated and can camouflage itself as a genuine app to do some damaging spy work in the background," commented [ESET](#) cybersecurity specialist Jake Moore.

"It is vital that users know what apps they are downloading, or they may risk unknowingly downloading something illicit."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 UK 'confident' Russia targeted virus labs
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/uk-confident-moscow-helped-hackers-target-virus-vaccine
GIST	<p>British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said on Sunday he was "absolutely confident" in allegations by the UK and its allies that Russia targeted labs conducting coronavirus research, branding the behaviour "outrageous and reprehensible".</p> <p>Britain, the United States and Canada on Thursday accused a hacking group called APT29 of spearheading the online attacks on various organisations involved in COVID-19 vaccine development.</p> <p>They said the collective is "almost certainly" linked to Russian intelligence, and intended to steal information and intellectual property.</p> <p>Moscow quickly rejected the accusations as "groundless", and its ambassador to London said in a British television interview Sunday the claims made "no sense".</p> <p>However, Raab reiterated that the trio's conclusions were based on assessments by Britain's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and its counterparts in the US and Canada.</p> <p>"We're absolutely confident that the Russian intelligence agencies were engaged in a cyber attack on research and development efforts in organisations in this country and internationally with a view either to sabotage or to profit," he told Sky News.</p> <p>"At the time that the world has come together to try and tackle COVID-19... I think it's outrageous and reprehensible that the Russian government is engaged in this activity."</p>

However Andrei Kelin, who was appointed Moscow's top envoy in Britain last November, ridiculed the claims in a BBC interview.

"I don't believe in this story at all, there is no sense in it," he told the Andrew Marr Show, adding he had learned about the hacking collective's existence from British media reports.

"In this world, to attribute any kind of computer hackers to any country, it is impossible."

- 'Spy story' -

Kelin also rejected a separate claim by London that "Russian actors" sought to disrupt last year's UK general election.

Raab said Thursday that perpetrators in Russia had circulated leaked trade documents between Britain and the United States, in a bid to sow greater division in the contest.

"I do not see any point in using this subject as a matter of interference," Kelin said.

"We do not interfere at all. We do not see any point in interference... we will try to settle relations and to establish better relations than now."

Russia and Britain have been at loggerheads since Moscow was accused of trying to kill double agent Sergei Skripal with a powerful military-grade nerve agent in 2018.

The attack in Salisbury, southwest England, came 12 years after the radiation poisoning of former spy Alexander Litvinenko in London.

Again, Russia has denied involvement and Kelin said the country is ready to move on from the controversies.

"We still don't understand why some spy story should disrupt this important business relationship," he added.

"We are prepared to turn the page and we are prepared to do business with Britain."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Rise in DDoS attacks lost in pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/home/security-news/news-archive/coronavirus/rise-in-ddos-attacks-lost-in-pandemic/
GIST	<p>hough they might get lost in all the other security threats exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, DDoS attacks, unsurprisingly, ticked up during the first part of 2020, most handily absorbed by the internet backbone – and the defensive efforts of targeted companies.</p> <p>Disruptions at AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon and streaming companies in mid-June stoked concerns that coordinated DDoS attacks were under way. Speculation swirled that China was behind a broader attack, but ultimately the disruption was largely blamed on misconfigurations by T-Mobile rather than a malicious attack on the internet backbone.</p> <p>Then during the second half of June, Amazon Web Services reported that it mitigated a 2.3-terabit attack in mid-February, the largest DDoS attack ever recorded. According to the AWS report, the attack was approximately 44 percent larger than any network volumetric event previously detected on AWS. CLDAP reflection attacks of this magnitude caused three days of elevated threat during a single week in February 2020 before subsiding.</p>

Akamai also reported on June 21 that it mitigated an attack on a European bank of 809 million packets-per-second (PPS). Most DDoS attacks are measured in bits-per-second (BPS) in which the attacker tries to overwhelm the inbound internet pipeline, sending more traffic to a circuit than it's designed to handle. In contrast, PPS attacks try to overwhelm network gear and/or applications in the customer's data center or cloud environment. Both are volumetric, but PPS attacks exhaust the resources of the gear, rather than the capability of the circuits – and are much less common than BPS attacks.

Roger Barranco, Akamai's vice president of global security operations explained that Akamai also mitigated a 1.44Tbps attack during the first week of June. Barranco said while the attack Akamai mitigated was similar to the Amazon attack in that they were both volumetric DDoS attacks, they are much different. The 2.3-terabit AWS- managed attack leveraged one vector CLDAP while the attack managed by Akamai included nine different vectors and actually had a significantly higher packet-per-second rate.

Kacey Clark, threat researcher at Digital Shadows, pinned the increased DDoS activity on an increased dependency on remote-access solutions during the COVID-19 period, which has increased the potential impact of cyberattacks overall.

"Internet traffic likely rose during the COVID-19 outbreak, so successful denial of service attacks are more likely to cause significant disruptions if critical services are impacted," Clark said. "As constant availability is crucial for many companies during this time, organizations should assess their infrastructure's fault tolerance to identify weak endpoints and increase their reliability. Other organizations may consider implementing a managed DDoS protection service to help protect against these types of attacks."

The Nexusguard report released on July 3 found that DDoS attacks went up 542 percent from Q42019 to Q12020, which confirms the many press reports of increased attacks.

On top of that, Alexander Gutnikov, system analyst at Kaspersky DDoS prevention service, added that increases in DDoS attacks from Q1 2020 and Q2 2020 grew about 5 percent, but noted that the small growth numbers are misleading.

"DDoS attacks are usually high in Q1 and in Q2 the number drops" Gutnikov said. "Therefore, it's unusual that Q1 and Q2 are almost equal. In addition, compared to the same period of Q2 2020, DDoS attacks grew more than threefold, so that can be considered dramatic."

Tony Miu, research manager at Nexusguard, pointed out that the vast majority of eventss are so-called "invisible attacks" that depending on the service provider, hold features that the provider would tend to ignore, disregard or not take note of when they happen. For a large ISP that typically serves Over the Top (OTT) providers, Miu said these might be attacks up to 5G. For smaller ISPs, attacks of up to 1Gbps in size are more normal.

At least for now, there's little cause for concern, Miu said.

"These 'smaller attacks can be absorbed by the ISP, or rather, simply passed through to the customer,'" Miu said. "The ISPs themselves are probably not impacted, but the customer would most likely suffer if they do not have any DDoS mitigation in place."

Akamai's Barranco agreed with Miu that the Internet infrastructure can absorb the vast majority of the recent DDoS attacks.

"While the size of DDoS attacks have been doubling every two years...the core of the Internet has the capacity to be largely unaffected by DDoS, but subsequent downstream links can be impacted resulting in spotty services levels as the malicious traffic gets closer to the victim's site," Barranco said. "This is why it's important to fight DDoS and other types of cyber-attacks in a distributed fashion as close to the attack

source as possible, versus closer to the target. The best way to protect yourself is to build a strong defensive posture, which requires an in-depth traffic analysis – this isn't a trivial effort and takes time."

Miu said companies can defend themselves by purchasing more bandwidth, but said while a larger pipe works to a certain extent, it will not fully solve a company's bandwidth security issues.

"The same can be said for tools or appliances," explained Miu. "The point is that organizations need to take an integrated approach to implement defense-in-depth and breadth, putting together best-of-breed solutions so that they can have a comprehensive and effective solution.

It also depends on the company. For companies where employees have to access company resources remotely, Miu said the security team should ensure that these remote resources are adequately protected. If the company relies on SaaS or other third-party services, they have to make sure these third party services are redundant and have taken into consideration such issues.

Stephen Boyce, principal consultant at the Crypsis Group, added that organizations can experience legitimate DDoS issues because of increasing demand on their web page; or they can experience malicious, targeted attacks carried out to overwhelm the server and prevent legitimate access.

"DDoS interruptions can be mitigated by creating a DDoS response plan, implementing a secure and redundant network architecture, leveraging the cloud, and having the ability to scale bandwidth as needed," Boyce said. "We also recommend using an up-to-date load balancer, network firewall, and web application firewall."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 VPNs leaked logs that 'didn't exist'
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2020/07/20/7-vpns-that-leaked-their-logs-the-logs-that-didnt-exist/
GIST	<p>VPNs are all the rage these days, because they're supposed to boost your privacy and stop you being tracked.</p> <p>In fact, "VPN" has become a word in its own right, pronounced <i>vee-pee-en</i>, and it's a crowded market with companies advertising online, on TV and even in print media to compete for your consumer dollars. Most VPNs have a free app you can download, but you typically need a paid subscription to make it work or to unlock premium services.</p> <p>The app will scramble all the network traffic between your device and the company's servers, and unscramble it and release it onto the internet from there – perhaps even in a different country – which does indeed disguise the true source of your data packets, and therefore makes you harder to trace.</p> <p>But the connection with privacy, and by association, with anonymity, comes from the fact that VPN is short for <i>virtual private network</i>, which has the word "private" right there in the name.</p> <p>In truth, the "private" part of a VPN isn't really about you being anonymous or pretending to be someone else.</p> <p>The <i>P</i> in VPN really just refers to the idea of using a public network to transmit traffic that in the olden days would have gone across a <i>private circuit</i> or a leased line, and was therefore considered and managed as part of your company's LAN, or local area network.</p> <p>In fact, if you've ever used a company VPN – and in this era of coronavirus lockdown, it's very likely you have – you will be well aware that your corporate VPN makes you identify yourself exactly, perhaps with a password and a 2FA token, so the company knows who you are before you connect.</p>

Your traffic is private from surveillance as it traverses the public network, because VPNs use encryption to shield the raw network packets from being sniffed out, but your traffic is not anonymous once you are inside the virtual castle of the company network.

In short, *the VPN itself knows who you are and sees what you get up to*, even if the routers through which your encrypted VPN packets travel do not.

And that's a good thing, because it means that you're only sharing that company network with other people who are supposed to be there (you hope!) and who can be held accountable for their behaviour, rather than with a random bunch of unknown strangers.

What about the logs?

As we mentioned above, consumer VPNs can arrange to decrypt your traffic and surface it onto the public internet far away from where you are, so they not only disguise your physical location (which does indeed improve your privacy somewhat), but also let you disguise your country of residence.

For many people, that is the primary value of a personal VPN service – it lets them bypass censorship that may be applied by ISPs in their own country, and it also lets them bypass so-called geoblocking that stops them watching overseas TV shows and movies or accessing other region-limited content.

But it also means that you are putting an awful lot of trust in the VPN provider, because that provider essentially becomes your new ISP, so you need to be aware of the extent to which they do (or don't) follow the surveillance and monitoring laws in the various countries where they operate.

Many VPNs tell you that “they don't keep any logs at all”, and therefore that they would have nothing on you that they could hand over to law enforcement even if they wanted to.

But many countries have legal mechanisms whereby various authorities – with or without a warrant, depending on the jurisdiction – can compel a service provider not only to start keeping logs for specific individuals, but also to keep quiet about the fact – in other words, they have to keep logs of your traffic, but they are gagged from warning you up front, and they can't tell you even if you ask.

This legal peculiarity led to a trend, a few years ago, of so-called “[warrant canaries](#)“, which were like canaries in coal mines that signalled dangerous gases by falling unconscious and dropping off their perches. Companies would regularly put notices into web pages or documents to say that they were *not* currently under any sort of gagging order. The idea was that removing the “negative gag” notice, which would essentially be a legal requirement if a gag order were applied, would therefore act as if the company had added a “positive gag” notice. This would therefore comply with the letter of the law, if not exactly its spirit. This sort of legal sophistry is not widely used any more, not least because it turned out to be quite confusing.

Of course, some VPNs will assure you that this can't happen to them (and therefore indirectly to you) because their companies are registered in countries where such legal provisions don't exist.

But any VPN knows where you are and, to some extent at least, who you are while you're using the system, and may even need to keep what amount to in-memory logs – *ephemeral data*, to use the jargon term – for some or all of each session, just to make the service work reliably.

What you have to assume, therefore, is that anything they know about your traffic for the purposes of handling it while you are online *never gets saved anywhere permanent*, whether by accident or design. And history suggests that ephemeral data – stuff that should evaporate forever from memory once it is no longer needed, and never get written to disk or forwarded to another server – has a way of surviving when it shouldn't.

After all, in recent memory, both [Google](#) and [Facebook](#) admitted that, sometimes, passwords you had typed in during the login process – data that was only ever supposed to be held in RAM and get scrubbed

after it had been validated – had accidentally been sent off in plaintext and saved in logfiles deep in their respective systems.

Facebook discovered in 2019 that it had committed [hundreds of millions of passwords](#) to disk, and set about finding and purging them; Google also admitted that it had incorrectly been saving away some passwords – we don’t know how many, but we know that [the data went back for 14 years](#) to 2005.

In other words, logging the unloggable is easy to do even if you genuinely set out not to do it, and even if you are two of the biggest internet companies out there, with large and well-funded cybersecurity teams.

What happened this time?

According to a [report](#) published last week by VPNMentor (note: VPNMentor earns affiliate revenue from links to and coupons for selected VPN companies that it recommends), its researchers stumbled across copious user logs from seven VPNs operating out of Hong Kong.

(VPNMentor [named](#) the affected services as follows: UFO VPN, FAST VPN, Free VPN, Super VPN, Flash VPN, Secure VPN, Rabbit VPN.)

Further digging suggests that these seven products were all rebranded from one main provider – software and IT services are often sold in this way, with the same (or very similar) code and back-end systems forming the core of offerings from several different licensees.

As you have probably guessed by now, this data wasn’t supposed to be publicly accessible, but was exposed via a cloud database – ElasticSearch, in this case – that had not been correctly configured.

According to VPNMentor, about 1 billion database entries relating to approximately 20 million users (so that’s an average of 50 items per user) were exposed, including various data fields including:

Activity logs, PII (names, emails, home address), cleartext passwords, Bitcoin payment information, support messages, personal device information, tech specs, account info, direct Paypal API links.

So not only did these VPNs collect data that they ought not to have retained at all, such as plaintext passwords, but they inadvertently exposed it publicly.

Furthermore, VPNMentor claims that “[a]ccording to their respective websites, every VPN [on the list] provides military-grade security features and zero logs policies to reinforce their users’ information security.”

Or, it would seem, don’t follow “zero logs” processes at all.

[Return to
Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/21 Covid-19 fuels cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/covid-19-fuels-cyber-attacks-exposes-gaps-in-disaster-recovery/
GIST	<p>The majority of businesses worldwide have seen a jump in cyber attacks as a result of employees working from home, with most reporting an increase in COVID-19 related malware. In Singapore, the global pandemic also revealed gaps in organisations' disaster recovery plans and IT operations.</p> <p>Some 91% of enterprises reported an increase in cyber attacks with more employees working from home amidst the coronavirus outbreak, according to a global survey released Tuesday by VMware Carbon Black. Conducted in March by research firm Opinion Matters, the study polled 3,012 IT and cybersecurity leaders across several markets including Japan, Australia, Germany, the UK, and Singapore, where there were 251 respondents.</p> <p>COVID-19 inspired malware saw the highest jump across the globe, with 92% noting an increase in such threats compared to typical volumes before the outbreak. Pandemic aside, 90% reported a climb in cyber attacks over the past year, with 80% noting an increase in the level of sophistication in such threats.</p>

Some 94% said they suffered breaches in the past 12 months, including 100% in Canada and the Netherlands, and 99.6% in the Nordics. In Asia-Pacific, 96% in Australia, 92% in Japan, and 80% in Singapore reported likewise.

Vulnerabilities in OSES were the most common cause of breaches, as cited by 18% worldwide, while island-hopping was the main cause of breaches in markets such as Italy and the Nordics and web application attacks were most common in Canada.

In Singapore, 43% saw increased attack volumes over the past year, reporting an average 1.67 breaches, and 67% said such threats now were more sophisticated. OS vulnerabilities were the most common cause of breaches, as cited by 20% in the city-state, while 15% pointed to holes in third-party application that led to security breaches.

Island-hopping attacks also climbed more than three-fold in frequency, with 10% of Singapore companies encountering such attacks and 12% cited these as the cause of breaches. In such tactics, attackers target a larger group to indirectly breach a network, such as an organisation's weaker and less secured community of business partners.

With added risks from third-party applications and the supply chain, these findings revealed that the extended enterprise was under pressure, according to Rick McElroy, VMware Carbon Black's cyber security strategist.

The COVID-19 outbreak also unveiled gaps in business recovery planning of 89% in the country, who described such holes as slight to severe. Another 86% uncovered gaps in their IT operations as a result of the pandemic, while 85% identified problems due to a remote workforce and 73.5% had issues related to visibility of cybersecurity threats.

McElroy said: "The global situation with COVID-19 has put the spotlight on business resilience and disaster recovery planning. Those organisations that have delayed implementing multi-factor authentication (MFA) appear to be facing challenges, as 32% of Singaporean respondents say the inability to implement MFA is the biggest threat to business resilience they are facing right now.

"These figures indicate that the surveyed CISOs (chief information security officers) may be facing difficulty in a number of areas when answering the demands placed on them by the COVID-19 situation," he said.

In addition, respondents in Singapore on average used more than 11 different tools or consoles to manage their cybersecurity strategy, indicating a complex and multi-technology environment that grew reactively with security tools bolted on to address evolving threats.

McElroy noted: "Siloed, hard-to-manage environments hand the advantage to attackers from the start. Evidence shows that attackers have the upper hand when security is not an intrinsic feature of the environment. As the cyber threat landscape reaches saturation, it is time for rationalisation, strategic thinking and clarity over security deployment."

According to the survey, 90% of Singapore respondents planned to up their spending in cyberdefence in the coming year. This, however, was a drop from 99% in the previous October 2019 study who indicated likewise.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 ICE questions admin of site 'BlueLeaks'
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xg84ww/ice-questions-admin-of-the-eye-archive-site-hosted-blue-leaks

On Thursday, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents questioned a woman who hosted on her site a copy of allegedly stolen [U.S. police internal documents, a trove nicknamed BlueLeaks](#). Motherboard has learned.

The woman, Meghan, who asked to be only identified by her first name because she fears retaliation from law enforcement, is an administrator of [The-Eye](#), a site that has undertaken several [high profile archiving projects](#), including hosting a BlueLeaks mirror for a brief time. She said three agents who identified themselves as part of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the investigative division of ICE, came to her home in the outskirts of Boston, Massachusetts on Thursday morning and asked questions about BlueLeaks, The Eye, and Emma Best, the person who founded the WikiLeaks-style website Distributed Denial of Secrets, which originally published the leaked trove of police documents.

“I was really caught off guard,” Meghan told Motherboard through an intermediary.

“They described BlueLeaks without mentioning it by name, and then proceeded to talk about how The-Eye was hosting it. They asked me if I knew anything about it and what my involvement was. I asked if they were referring to BlueLeaks and they said yes,” said Meghan, who is an open source developer and archivist.

Meghan said she replied saying she doesn’t curate what ends up on The-Eye, and that BlueLeaks was sourced from Distributed Denial of Secrets. The agents, she added, also asked if she personally knew Best.

“They kept probing to see if I had any connections to [Distributed Denial of Secrets],” Meghan said. “And then eventually asked me to become an informant and offered to pay me for any information that led to arrests.” (ICE has [previously been reported to pay informants](#)).

The agents' visit is the latest development in the law enforcement investigation into the leak. Earlier this month, [German prosecutors seized the server that was used to host BlueLeaks](#), acting in [coordination with U.S. authorities](#).

Meghan said the agents said that she would be “compensated financially and protected” if she gave them any “actionable” information. Instead, she said she tried to distance herself from the whole situation as she didn’t even know who Best was until they mentioned their name.

“I’m not involved with a lot of overtly political stuff so it’s interesting to have gotten wrapped up in this,” she added. “Definitely not how I expected or wanted my day to start!”

Motherboard attempted to contact multiple HSI agents at the number they gave Meghan. One of them did not respond to multiple calls and a voicemail. The other hung up after I identified as a reporter. A couple of hours later, a DHS spokesperson from the Miami field office called offering to help, following up from our calls to the agents.

The spokesperson said that he could not “confirm nor deny the existence of an investigation,” and declined to comment on whether any agents visited the woman in the Boston area.

Best said that as far as they knew, this is the first time authorities had questioned anyone in connection with BlueLeaks (though authorities did take action by seizing the German server).

“It’s disturbing that the government is trying to intimidate people into not sharing BlueLeaks. First, they seized our public server, now they’re going after people hosting mirrors and interrogating them not just about BlueLeaks, but about me,” Best told Motherboard in an online chat. “So far, the government has made no attempt to contact us—they simply went full-Gestapo right out of the gate and seem more interested in suppressing and retaliating than they are in investigating.”

HEADLINE	07/20 Citizen app alerts users to crime, incidents
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/citizen/
GIST	<p>ANTHONY GOBLIRSCH'S MOM is driving him to the evacuation zone. A gas leak has sprung up in the area, and mother and son are zipping to the scene in the family's SUV, a black GMC Denali.</p> <p>Hope sits half cross-legged, her right foot working the pedals while her left foot stays tucked against her right thigh. Anthony is in the back, next to the vacant car seat meant for his younger sister, listening to a police scanner and thumbing a map on Hope's smartphone as he feeds her driving directions. Anthony is using his mother's phone because he's only 12 years old. He has to wait until he's a little older before he gets his own.</p> <p>Anthony is a thin white kid with straight brown hair, his nose and cheeks splotted with freckles. His shirt bears the logo of the local youth gymnastics program he belonged to before everything got canceled. It's late February 2020, just a couple short weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic will grind the world to a halt.</p> <p>Anthony remembers something as they drive: "Oh, Mom, we need to feed my beetles today."</p> <p>"I just fed your beetles," Hope says.</p> <p>"OK, awesome, thanks Mom, you're the best." Anthony shifts his attention back to the scanner as some chatter comes across the line. More fire units are en route to the gas leak.</p> <p>They're driving through the suburbs of San Mateo, just south of San Francisco. Anthony first heard the call about the gas leak through the scanner app on Hope's computer, which he monitors regularly. That's when the pair hopped in the SUV. By now, officials have ordered a local preschool to evacuate. People in the surrounding buildings have been told to shelter in place.</p> <p>When they arrive, the intersection next to the school is blocked by a fire engine. Anthony correctly identifies it as truck 23 from San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department. Hope takes the next left and stops the car in the street. "I'm gonna let you out here, buddy," she says. "OK, good luck!"</p> <p>Anthony bounds out of the vehicle, his mom's phone in hand. The heels of his shoes are squished beneath his feet, flattened in his rush to leave the house. Hope rolls away as Anthony attaches the phone to a lightweight tripod, his quick and precise movements displaying the evidence of a practiced hand.</p> <p>Anthony moves toward the commotion, holding the tripod out in front of him. He taps a button on the screen, and the camera starts broadcasting the scene live onto the internet. He starts talking. "Anthony G., reporting live at a large gas leak which evacuated a school ..."</p> <p>A few minutes later, a woman approaches Anthony and asks what's happening. He gives her a rapid-fire recap of everything he knows about the situation: the gas leak, the evacuation, the orders for locals to stay indoors, which first-response units have arrived so far.</p> <p>She stares at him. "Wow. We got a little reporter here."</p> <p>"Yeah! Thanks!" Anthony turns back to the camera and continues his narration.</p> <p>The woman's brow furrows. "That's scary," she says as she walks away, throwing a glance back at Anthony as she goes.</p> <p>Her concern is justified. Anthony is filming with Citizen, an app that alerts its users to nearby emergency incidents and lets them livestream from the scene. Anthony has filmed it all: car crashes, home invasions, police pursuits, and, unwittingly, the aftermath of a suicide. In the year that Anthony has been uploading to Citizen, he's filmed hundreds of these videos: 675 to be exact.</p>

His prolificity has earned him a fan base—other Citizen users who comment to commend his videos and ask, “Where’s Anthony G?” on incidents he doesn’t cover. There are hecklers too. They mock his cinematography and insult his preteen voice. He’s gotten used to ignoring all but the most vicious trolls.

Anthony is just one of millions of users who have flocked to Citizen for viewing, reporting, and commenting on local incidents in real time. The company says 5 million people have signed up. It won’t confirm how many of those users are regularly active on the platform, or how many actually post videos rather than just lurk. Still, Citizen is a vibrant and growing platform—one that appeals to our curiosity and our base human desire to not only stay aware of nearby danger, but to draw ever closer toward it.

Citizen Crime

The first thing you see when you open Citizen is a map. It is an app that always runs in [dark mode](#), the black grids of New York, San Francisco, Baltimore, Los Angeles—any of the 19 cities where the app is currently available—splayed across the screen. Pinch and zoom and you’ll see dots show up on the map. Each one indicates a local crisis: a fire, an assault, a [man wielding two tridents](#). All this geolocated information is gleaned from the city’s emergency scanners and filtered through Citizen employees, who compile the incidents and place them on the map. The app’s always-on location awareness is a necessity. If the incident is in your neighborhood, the app sends you a push notification about the potential danger. If Citizen decides you’re *really* close, a button appears to let you livestream what’s happening.

Most Citizen users aren’t like Anthony. They don’t film hundreds of videos or chase down fires and traffic collisions with their moms on the weekend. Maybe they fear for their safety when they walk through a city. Maybe they need to know where the [protests](#) are. Maybe they just want to [talk shit in the comments](#).

Whatever the reason, Citizen has already appealed to the millions who have created user accounts, hundreds of thousands of them in the past two months alone. The creators of the app see it as a tool for transparency, a neutral, simplified messenger that grants city dwellers access to the millions of cryptic coded reports that zip across emergency scanners every day. But Citizen’s ambitions don’t stop there.

Since the [death of George Floyd](#) sparked worldwide protests against police brutality, [Citizen’s user numbers have surged](#) as people look for ways to monitor the demonstrations and anticipate the movements of the law enforcement officials seeking to control them. In May, Citizen [added a contact-tracing feature](#) to its service that allowed users to opt in to help track the spread of Covid-19.

Citizen is well positioned to seize upon this moment of societal upheaval. The app promises the feeling of safety and community, both luxuries that are sorely missed in a world where people have been forced apart and incensed by rampant inequality. Citizen’s pitch is especially appealing as this country reconsiders its overreliance on law enforcement and what it means to keep a community safe in the first place.

Citizen may want to stay neutral, but that’s not so easy. Especially not when you want to solve such a fundamental problem as safety at a time when the world is on fire. Critics of the app have long pointed out the way the app can amplify the country’s larger societal problems. The app’s comment sections tend to devolve into streams of racism and hatred. Users have complained about the app stoking their [anxiety](#) and [paranoia](#) as it constantly reminds them of the dangers beyond their doorstep. Citizen also faces very real concerns about its potential to enable [racial profiling](#) and [discriminatory surveillance](#).

“What Covid, what George Floyd’s killing and the availability of these new technological tools have shared and surfaced is that we have an unequal society,” says Nicol Turner Lee, director of the Center for Technology Innovation at the Brookings Institution. “Whoever is in control of that information, or whoever controls that app or that platform, they control the narrative.”

For a company so enamored with creating transparency, Citizen is remarkably reticent to comment on any specific features aimed at fixing the darker aspects of its service. It insists that there are solutions at work, but it has not been willing to disclose any of those plans yet. In a way, the company’s secrecy has only backfired, by inviting suspicion and speculation about [potential nefarious intent](#).

Citizen may want to create a world of openness and accountability, but that effort must soon turn inward if the company wants to convince people that it only wants to keep them safe.

Watching the Watchers

Andrew Frame, Citizen's founder and CEO, likes to talk about burning buildings. He's not a pyromaniac or anything. It's just a hypothetical example he and others who work at Citizen like to use when you ask them why they made the app.

"Why is there this asymmetry of information between the first responders who have access to everything going on, including a fire in your building, and everybody else?" Frame asks. "You, in your building, you don't have access to that information. That's crazy. That's *your* information. That's *your* address."

Information about you, what you buy, where you go, even where you *look* is the oil that fuels the digital economy.

Citizen often gets grouped in with [other services](#) that sell the promise of increased safety. The easy analogies are Nextdoor, a social platform with a history of [racism and abuse](#) masquerading as hand-wringing, and Amazon's Ring, which has been criticized for getting [too cozy](#) with law enforcement. These comparisons frustrate Frame. He's a true startup founder who believes his product represents a unique vision. Those other labels—social media, security system, neighborhood watch—don't quite fit Citizen either.

"We don't have competition," Frame says. "We've created our own category."

He's got a point. Citizen offers a service that nothing else has quite managed to pull off. Sure, Ring can capture video clips of crimes, but the cameras can't see much beyond your property line. Nextdoor offers a forum for people to bicker about their safety concerns, but it's similarly confined to the limits of a single neighborhood. Only Citizen alerts people to crimes and catastrophes at both the local and hyper-local level in real time, then lets them comment and share information with each other. It's the crowdsourced canary in your pocket that squawks whenever there's a report of a [man stabbed](#) or [forty teenagers fighting](#).

"Safety is one of the core primal needs that all 7 and a half billion people have," Frame says. "It's not a demographic. Safety is something that everybody requires and needs."

It's a lofty mission: keeping people safe by keeping them aware. Citizen is a company as dependent on the chaotic nature of the startup ethos as it is resistant to being lumped in with the rest of the so-called disruptors. Ask Citizen employees what attracted them to the organization in the first place and you'll get answers that align their outlook with that of their leader.

"There's a lot of big swinging dicks in Silicon Valley," one Citizen spokesperson told me. "Andrew's delusions of grandeur were by far the most humble."

From the beginning, the company has struggled to convince people that its intentions are pure. The app [burst into existence](#) in October 2016 as [Vigilante](#), a product that was introduced to the world via a [video](#) that depicts a small army of bystanders coming together to stop an assault by wielding their phone cameras. The marketing campaign was quickly condemned by law enforcement for suggesting that people put themselves in harm's way and attempt to levy justice unchecked. It was also lambasted by the media and [ejected from the App Store](#) within 48 hours of its arrival. Five months later, wounds licked and souls searched, the company [rebranded](#) as Citizen. The service stayed nearly the same—a platform for ordinary users with a smartphone to learn about and report on emergencies in their neighborhood—albeit with more measured marketing and a less aggressive moniker. But the suspicion and fiery op-eds never really abated.

Citizen has continued to tweak its service as critics point out the platform's flaws. It created a full-time content moderation team to review comment sections and nuke offensive posts. Designers [reconfigured the visuals](#) of the app to deemphasize the alarming amount of alerts and provide visual feedback that

shows users when an area is safe. Citizen set clear guidelines about what incidents it would and wouldn't push: no reports of suspicious people, no domestic disputes, no suicides.

These are far from perfect solutions; any service that allows user contributions is bound to be messy and divisive. But they're still better than the response common to the tech industry, where social platforms often meet such activities with [dead-eyed detachment](#).

Cash Only

Before the pandemic forced society into isolation, Citizen was expanding quickly. In March the VC firm Goodwater Capital [injected \\$20 million](#) into Citizen, a full third of the [total funding](#) the company has ever raised. It enabled Citizen to accelerate its rollout schedule. In the early days of 2020, Citizen was adding a new city to its platform just about every week.

When quarantine began, the company's employees had to adjust to working from home, away from the Uplift standing desks and curved computer monitors that filled Citizen's downtown Manhattan office. The team adapted its product quickly, supplementing the app with new features like regular updates of Covid-19 statistics and city-specific shelter-in-place regulations. When the police killing of George Floyd kicked off nationwide demonstrations protesting police brutality against Black Americans, a slew of new users downloaded the app as a way to [monitor the turmoil](#).

Despite growing adoption, Citizen still has yet to generate any revenue. ("We've never made a penny," Frame says.) It's a free app with no ads, and so far, the company has been mysterious about where its profit motives ultimately lie. But that secrecy could be coming to an end. Frame told me that he plans to turn Citizen into a monetizable product this year.

"At the end of the day, this is a C corp: We are here to make money," Frame says. "But we are here to make money responsibly. We want to deliver on a mission. We don't want to compromise on our values. We want to make money for shareholders responsibly. That's fuel. The way to build an engine that scales is to have capitalism working for you."

The company says it doesn't consider views, clicks, or time spent to be valuable metrics for measuring success. Frame says Citizen will never sell user data or serve ads to its users. But while its plans might not depend on engagement in the app, it does depend on the sheer volume of its user base. The company has not announced any specifics, but the general thrust of the plan is clear: Get enough users to be able to create a tiered experience, then sell subscriptions for premium features.

"The monetization indirectly follows," Frame says. "The size of our network, that's the size of the audience that we get to sell this next generation of safety features to. There will be features coming out available only to those who pay—beyond what Citizen offers today."

Citizen depends on human beings. Algorithms and scanner-monitoring hardware can only take it so far. After all, alerts still have to be individually vetted and sent out by Citizen employees. Those alerts are received by users who interpret those messages, share them, and add to them by filming or commenting on a scene. The more videos are filmed, the more the app catches people's attention and garners downloads. If Citizen has to grow before it can make money, then it has to entice people to use the app in the first place.

"Citizen will give you that power to be safe and informed and make better decisions," says Dennis "Prince" Mapp, Citizen's head of culture and community who has been with the company since nearly the beginning. "Instead of walking into a fire, I can walk away from the fire."

The problem is, a person walking around the block to avoid a fire does not make for a very exciting marketing video. What captures people's attention is footage of the [fire itself](#) or a [kidnapped child](#) or some [straight-up terrorism](#). Citizen's current marketing strategy relies on pointing to positive interactions captured on the app. In April, Citizen started to send users notifications containing what it calls Magic Moments—slickly edited videos that recall incidents where Citizen users came to the rescue or prevented themselves and others from falling victim to an awful tragedy. (Not all of them involved disaster porn.

Magic Moments have included a [celebration of essential workers](#) and people [reuniting a lost dog with its owner](#).)

Citizen can't encourage users to get closer to danger or race across town to film a horrific incident; the Vigilante fiasco taught the team that lesson. But to show what the app is really capable of, it needs the participation and content provided by its users. It needs users who don't just sit at home and gape at the screen while [someone gets assaulted in a Trader Joe's](#). The people who will take Citizen to the next level are the ones willing to go to the scene, to get the footage.

To grow, Citizen needs videos. It needs *content*. It needs people like Anthony G.

New Live Crew

Anthony first got into Citizen after his appendix burst. A friend's mom mentioned the app in passing and Anthony grew fascinated with it as he recovered from his surgery. One day, after he was able to get up and about again, he smelled smoke and realized that a neighbor's house had caught fire. He was home working with a tutor at the time. He begged them to take him outside to film the blaze.

Since then, Anthony has reported on incidents nearly nonstop. He listens to the police scanner from the moment he wakes up to the moment he goes to bed. He'll go out on reporting trips multiple times a week, sometimes multiple times in a day. Sometimes Anthony's dad or grandparents chauffeur him to scenes. If the incident is in the neighborhood, he might ride his bike. But most of the time, his mom drives him.

"He prefers when it's me because I leave the house much more quickly than my husband," Hope says. "I usually am barefoot and running out the door like we're some kind of tag team news team."

"It works much better when it's Mom and me," Anthony says.

The duo's dynamic sometimes draws ire. In the comments under Anthony's videos, people have yelled at Hope, called her a terrible mother, and questioned her parenting. One Citizen commenter threatened to report Hope to Child Protective Services. Anthony has been bullied and harassed, most notably by a pair of Citizen users who went on a two-month-long campaign against him before being banned from the app.

It's tempting to rush to similar judgements, to label Anthony some kind of young, wanna-be *Nightcrawler*. But he isn't irresponsible or a sociopath. He's just a kid who's interested in the excitement around an emergency response. His favorite incidents are ones that require Hazmat crews to show up, simply because those guys have the coolest response vehicles.

"His sisters always say, 'That's so bad Anthony, you want bad things to happen to people,'" Hope says, "and he's like, 'It's not that I want anything bad to happen to people, it's that I just find everything interesting and I like to see how they respond.'"

Anthony is far from the only power user on Citizen. Users in cities from New York to Los Angeles to Indianapolis have each posted hundreds of videos on the app. Some of them do it just for kicks. Others use the app to supplement efforts to track and share info about local crimes in Facebook groups and other anti-crime organizations online.

When the app moves into a new city, Citizen hires locals to film incidents and create content as a way to kickstart local interest in the app. Members of these unofficial "Street Teams" are paid per video, as long as the videos run a certain length and meet a reasonable standard for quality. Street Team users aren't identified within the app; former paid contractors I interviewed for this story said they were explicitly told to avoid giving any indication that they were being paid by Citizen to post content. The company wanted the videos to feel organic, they were told.

Before the pandemic, Kevin Powell worked full time as one of Citizen's street team contractors in Indianapolis. He's recorded 747 videos at the time of this writing, all of them uploaded in the time since Citizen established a presence in the city in [January](#). Powell says the work appeals to him. He runs

a [Facebook page](#) dedicated to local breaking news and hopes to gain a job as a photojournalist, or as a stringer who shoots photo and video directly for local news outlets. Powell says he prioritizes incidents that garner the most attention on the platform. These also tend to be the more brutal incidents, the shootings and stabbings.

“When I’m behind that video screen, it’s almost like I’m watching a movie,” Powell says. “You basically have to turn off your emotions to do this work. If not, you’re not going to be able to do it. I try not to think about what’s actually taking place. I’m trying to think about what I’m there to do.”

“There is some sort of a thrill going out and doing it,” says Logan Williams, a former contractor who filmed videos for Citizen in Los Angeles. “It’s a rush, it releases endorphins.”

In March, Citizen suspended its Street Team program and stopped all payments to its contractors, citing pandemic-related safety concerns. A Citizen spokesperson said the company hasn’t made any decisions about when the program might resume.

Thrilling and Chilling

Hobbyists and hyper-concerned civilians have monitored police radio chatter for decades. There are whole internet forums and communities on YouTube dedicated to following the communications of law enforcement, fire departments, and other first-response agencies. It’s an activity that attracts a certain personality type, curious and discerning. Citizen isn’t the first app that gives these enthusiasts the ability to livestream, but is the one that is completely dedicated to it. It’s no wonder amateur stringers flock to it.

“Everybody wants to be the hero, or the source, or a key player in a situation,” says Andy Frakes, a former Citizen employee responsible for sending out incident alerts. “For better or worse, unfortunately it’s usually for worse, people want to be involved, or just get that catharsis that for whatever reason they need more than anyone else.”

For someone like Anthony, it’s a kick just to get a look at the action.

“Seeing the lights and sirens just brings out the little kid inside of me,” Anthony says. “I don’t know. I just kind of like that stuff.”

It’s not all motivated by child-like wonder. Anthony’s time responding to hundreds of emergency calls has molded his grown-up aspirations. When Anthony gets older, he wants to be a cop.

“This obviously is not a good time to be in law enforcement with everything going on,” Hope admits. “But my heart goes out for the majority of law enforcement officers. So I feel like, if this is what he really wants to do when he gets older ... I mean, he’s 12, so it could change. He could change his mind 10 times, but as of now, I think you let your kids follow their passion if it’s something they like to do.”

Thin Blue Line

The relationship between Citizen and law enforcement has always been uneven. When Citizen first launched in New York City, NYPD officials were overwhelmingly against it, frustrated by the idea that the app [might encourage aspiring crimefighters](#). Bill Bratton, the former NYPD commissioner and co-architect of New York’s controversial stop-and-frisk policy, staunchly opposed the app when he was in office. In an unexpected turn of events, Bratton has now become an advisor on Citizen’s board.

It has the potential to be a techy breakthrough in community engagement for emergency agencies. But for those not inclined to trust law enforcement, Citizen feels like yet another tool of mass policing.

“What the Citizen app is doing is empowering people as law enforcement, and we already know that’s a problem,” says Nicol Turner Lee, the tech policy advocate. “Not everybody can be a vigilante in a country that is already skewed when it comes to race relations. We don’t need people, particularly in this highly partisan, highly polarized environment, to have additional means to be able to further discriminate against vulnerable populations.”

In March, Citizen added features that have become staples of any standard social media platform: activity notifications, private messaging, the ability to add friends. Around the same time, Citizen [reintroduced a feature](#) that allows users to [create their own incident alerts](#) instead of waiting for the incident to show up after it's been broadcast on a scanner and added to the app by Citizen's employees.

Last August, Citizen's then head of product Keith Peiris [likened the next expansion](#) of Citizen to a "global safety network" that would give users the ability to push a button to signal to nearby users that they need help. Your own personal Bat Signal.

This isn't some speculative cyberpunk future. The demand for a service that provides instantaneous safety is there, and multiple services are already shouldering their way into that space. PulsePoint, another app that tracks emergency scanners and pinpoints response locations, has long had a [CPR alert](#) feature that notifies users when someone nearby signals that they're having a cardiac arrest. Life 360, a location tracking app for families, launched a subscription plan in mid-July that offers an [S.O.S. button](#) only accessible to paid subscribers.

In the right hands, these kinds of collaborative services can be a tool for good. Volunteers at [Life Camp](#), a New York-based organization dedicated to preventing street violence, use a modified version of Citizen to pinpoint locations of fights as they're happening. Life Camp founder Erica Ford has been an advisor to Citizen since the Vigilante days. According to her, Citizen alerts come through five to ten minutes before the police can notify Life Camp.

"By the time police respond, we interrupted the incident, broke up the fight, the kids are gone, nobody's arrested, and police are just pulling up," Ford says.

But Life Camp is an organization of trained, dedicated volunteers embedded in their community and prepared to protect it. Enabling that kind of capability for everyday civilians carries with it an inherent risk. Letting users call for help is a much different proposition than merely providing them with information. It requires an explicit endorsement for active participation. And exactly what level of participation that entails is up for interpretation.

"When you use a can opener, it's a can opener; it never changes," Lee says. "When you use an app, that app can be whatever people want it to be. That's the nature of this fluidity in technology today. That's where we have to be a lot more careful. Companies have to be a lot more consistent in ensuring that their technology is not being changed in ways that it produces unequal outcomes for different populations."

As this country evaluates its relationship with law enforcement, communities will have to decide how much they're willing to trust the private companies that seek to move into that space. We already live in a world where [unequal policing](#) fuels disparities in Black and lower income communities. To put a price tag on personal safety risks perpetuating those same inequalities. If Citizen is going to ask people to trust it, it has to be willing to do more than just acknowledge the problems that exist on its platform. It has to articulate how it plans to fix them.

"If you're doing those things, then you need to talk about it and be transparent about it," Lee says. "Let people know how you're trying to listen to them and change things and not impose what you think is the right way to do this."

Image Conscious

At the end of May, Anthony G. abruptly stopped posting to Citizen. He cited frustrating technical glitches—videos being cut off, audio dropping out—as the reason he gave up on the app. That's not to say his output has slowed down. Instead, he created a [YouTube channel](#), where he continues to upload videos of emergency responses and the occasional police tribute video. Moving off of Citizen has brought a newfound focus to Anthony's videos; freed from the live-only format, he can now spend more time on editing and composition. He's also gotten more careful about what he posts, taking care to blur faces of

juveniles and take down videos when he has second thoughts about whether they are appropriate. In a way, he has outgrown Citizen.

But there's another reason Anthony left the app. The San Mateo police department had been tracking his Citizen activity. One day, two officers came to Anthony's house. They wanted to talk to him about his videos.

"It was just a kind of mindfulness conversation," says Michael Haobsh, one of the officers who visited Anthony. "Be careful about who you're videoing, because you don't want to get dragged into court on a civil suit for broadcasting this kind of information."

Anthony took their words to heart.

"My thinking was, I want to be in law enforcement when I'm older," Anthony says. "They don't let just anyone in, so I want to be on their good side."

On June 10, Anthony popped back onto Citizen for the first time in over two weeks. There was a strong-arm robbery in San Mateo, the app said. Commenters clamored for Anthony, asking for him by name. So he gave in, turned on his mom's camera, and started reporting. Of the dozens of user comments on the incident, easily half of them were about Anthony himself. "Anthony G is back and I've never been happier!!!!" read one. Another: "What the heck is happening to our town? On a side note, Anthony G is a better reporter than the Channel 4 news team!"

The excitement didn't last long. Anthony soon remembered the house call—and the talking-to he got—from the local cops. "Halfway through the report I thought, oh shoot, I'm not supposed to be doing this," Anthony says.

So he stopped, for good this time. He hastily gave one last signoff and shut down the video. The Citizen incident Anthony reported on has since been deleted.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Sophisticated smishing scheme in Finland
SOURCE	https://blog.knowbe4.com/phishing-attack-in-finland-uncovers-sophisticated-smishing-scheme?utm_medium=email&hsmi=91654961&hsenc=p2ANqtz-9TxzUdc2WKmgVjMeHaYSg2SJT0BfUnwjkIS1bZDUUWMjCCvh8QzrTfI17XaytMUCIXP1f7CYlwvig6WWq_qjDBsBkQ&utm_content=91654961&utm_source=hs_email
GIST	<p>The Helinski Police Department is investigating a sophisticated smishing scheme in which attackers were able to steal more than 200,000 euros (US\$228,736), Yle reports. The scammers sent text messages impersonating Posti Group, Finland's main postal service. The messages claimed that packages addressed to the user had been sent to their nearest post office. The user was instructed to click a link in the message that would take them to a phishing site, where they were told to verify their identity by entering their banking details.</p> <p>"The scheme involved getting victims to hand over their personal details and online banking information, which were then used to get instant loans," Yle explains. "The loans were then immediately transferred to a bank account in Finland and withdrawn from ATMs in Estonia. Police say that different individuals were used to withdraw the funds and to pass them along to others in the criminal chain. Initial information suggests that banking information from customers of Nordea and OP banks was used to apply for the payday loans."</p> <p>The police said thirty victims fell for the scam and each lost an average of approximately 19,000 euros. Helsinki police detective Jukkapekka Risu said the scammers had planned the scheme precisely and exercised good OPSEC.</p>

	<p>“The con was professionally executed,” the detective said. “In all of the cases, the website was available for just one weekend and many text messages were sent out then. Mules were used to withdraw the money the same weekend.”</p> <p>Scammers are able to craft messages and phishing sites that are indistinguishable from legitimate communications. The best way to defend yourself against these techniques is knowing how scammers operate and what they’re after. New-school security awareness training can help your employees recognize social engineering tactics so they can avoid falling for these types of scams.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Fake cryptocurrency apps deliver malware
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/more-fake-cryptocurrency-apps-deliver-gmera-malware-mac-users
GIST	<p>Security researchers at ESET have identified a new campaign targeting Mac users with trojanized cryptocurrency trading apps designed to deliver the GMERA malware.</p> <p>Previous attacks involving this malware family were observed leveraging malicious versions of the trading app Stockfolio, and security researchers also associated the GMERA Trojan with the activities of North Korean hackers.</p> <p>Recently identified campaigns featuring the malware involved the use of several websites that distributed malicious applications claiming to provide cryptocurrency trading capabilities.</p> <p>The cybercriminals built their malicious programs using the Kattana trading application, using it to package their malware. Four different brandings were used in the observed campaigns, namely Cointrazer, Cupatrade, Licatrade and Trezarus.</p> <p>The GMERA Trojan was designed to steal various types of information from the compromised machines, including browser cookies, cryptocurrency wallets, and even screenshots.</p> <p>More recent versions of macOS, however, limit the attackers’ ability to take screenshots by requiring the user’s explicit consent to finalize the action. Regardless, the hackers haven’t tried to circumvent that limitation, ESET notes.</p> <p>What is yet uncertain is how exactly the attackers are promoting their malicious applications. Most likely the hackers are using social engineering to trick users into installing the malware. In March, Kattana issued an alert on hackers contacting victims individually to lure them into downloading the trojanized apps.</p> <p>“Copycat websites are set up to make the bogus application download look legitimate. For a person who doesn’t know Kattana, the websites do look legitimate,” ESET notes.</p> <p>The cybercriminals also used digital certificates to sign their applications, and it appears that they acquired the certificates specifically for these attacks. Apple has already removed the offending certificates.</p> <p>GMERA uses reverse shell backdoors to allow interaction with the operators. The malware uses HTTP for communication with the command and control (C&C) server, but no commands were seen being issued via this channel, as all of them were being served through the reverse shells.</p> <p>The attackers only proceed to exfiltrate data from systems that are considered of interest. Files selected for exfiltration are compressed in a ZIP archive and sent to a server controlled by the attackers via HTTP.</p> <p>“The numerous campaigns run by this group show how much effort they’ve expended over the last year to compromise Mac users doing online trading. We still aren’t sure how someone becomes a victim, downloading one of the trojanized applications, but the hypothesis of the operators directly contacting</p>

	their targets and socially engineering them into installing the malicious application seems the most plausible,” ESET concludes.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Hackers attack Telecom Argentina
SOURCE	https://cryptonews.com/news/hackers-hack-telecom-argentina-demand-usd-7-5-million-in-mon-7161.htm
GIST	<p>Telecom S.A., the largest telecommunications company in Argentina, has suffered a ransomware attack as hackers demand USD 7.5m in privacy coin monero (XMR) to be paid until the night of Tuesday, July 21. If the company does not meet the deadline, the payable amount will rise to USD 15 million (XMR 216,189).</p> <p>The hackers are not only demanding the ransom to be paid in XMR but also left a message with links where to buy this privacy coin.</p> <p>Per the local news outlet, the attack has not affected users or internet and telephone services provided by Telecom Argentina. Still, the company has reportedly lost access to Office365 and OneDrive files. Other affected internal systems include corporate VPN, Citrix, Siebel, Genesys, the Customer and Field Service virtual machines, and internal users’ PCs.</p> <p>The attack has likely come through an attachment in an email, according to speculations on social media. Twitter user @pablowasserman said that the malware targeted company’s customer relationship management (CRM) software Siebel, which contains data from its clients.</p> <p>In a leaked internal memorandum to employees, the company said it was looking for a viable solution as soon as possible, simultaneously asking its employees to avoid certain behaviors like using the corporate network, open suspicious files or emails from unknown recipients, and turning off computers until the situation is normalized.</p> <p>Telecom Argentina S.A. is yet to issue an official statement on the situation.</p> <p>According to local reports, the attack had started as early as Wednesday, when employees began noticing trouble accessing company’s VPN and other databases. Preliminary estimates indicate that the attack may impact daily operations of at least 18,000 teams.</p> <p>The malware used in the attack is REvil ransomware, also known as Sodinokibi, which was first detected on April 17, 2019. The malware is used by a financially motivated group GOLD SOUTHFIELD.</p> <p>Ransomware is a type of malware that aims to encrypt files on infected computers and makes them inaccessible until payment is made. Even when the payment is made, there is no guarantee that the hackers will unlock the files.</p> <p>The hack happened just a few days after the massive Twitter hack, which is now being investigated by the FBI.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Cyberattacks hit Israel water system
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/two-more-cyber-attacks-hit-israels-water-system/
GIST	Two more cyber-attacks have hit Israel's water management facilities, officials from the Water Authority said last week.

Officials said the attacks took place last month, in June, and didn't cause any damage to the attacked organizations.

The first attack hit agricultural water pumps in upper Galilee, while the second one hit water pumps in the central province of Mateh Yehuda, [local media reported](#) last week.

"These were specific, small drainage installations in the agriculture sector that were immediately and independently repaired by the locals, causing no harm or any real-world effects," the Water Authority said in a statement.

The two attacks come after Israel suffered [a first cyber-attack](#) on its water supply system in April.

Initial reports played down the April attack, but [a Financial Times report](#) from June citing Western intelligence sources claimed that hackers had gained access to some of Israel's water treatment systems and tried altering water chlorine levels before being detected and stopped. If the attack had been successful and water chlorine levels had been adjusted, attackers could have caused mild poisoning of the local population served by the affected treatment facility.

Following the intrusion, the Israel National Cyber-Directorate (INCD) and the Water Authority sent out an alert urging water treatment facilities to change the passwords of their internet-connected equipment "with emphasis on operational systems and chlorine control devices in particular."

Israeli officials never attributed the April attack, but the Washington Post, citing foreign intelligence officials, said the intrusion was [linked to Iran](#).

Two weeks later, in mid-May, a cyber-attack [crippled the port of Shahid Rajaei in the Iranian city of Bandar Abbas](#), which the Washington Post, citing the US intelligence sources, [linked to Israel](#), as a likely payback for the April attack.

The attack on Israel's water utility seems, however, to have been an important moment between the two countries, as it also marked the start of a series of mysterious accidents and explosions detected across Iran's critical infrastructure -- such as petrochemical plants, nuclear fuel enrichment centers, power plants, ports, and more.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Western Australia huge privacy breach
SOURCE	https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/unforgivable-the-privacy-breach-that-exposed-sensitive-details-of-wa-s-virus-fight-20200720-p55dsm.html
GIST	<p>One of Western Australia's biggest privacy breaches, which involves the interception of thousands of State Government communications, is under investigation.</p> <p>Nine News revealed on Monday evening that the most sensitive information to be hacked and posted to a public website relates to the management of the Covid-19 crisis in WA.</p> <p>But the breach also impacts St John Ambulance, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Justice.</p> <p>When shown the extent of the privacy violation, Australian Medical Association WA president Andrew Miller was appalled.</p> <p>"This is an extraordinary and unacceptable breach of privacy and questions the integrity of the coronavirus response in WA," he said.</p> <p>"This needs to be remedied immediately and an inquiry held."</p>

More than 400 webpages – many communications and messages between health officials and doctors – were posted to the website.

They include details of people in quarantine and how their cases are being managed. The website includes phone numbers and addresses.

"The fact that this is even happening, and presumably there's been a vulnerability since the get-go of the pandemic, speaks to the design of the response," Dr Miller said.

"If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would find it hard to believe. We want answers from the top immediately as to how they will fix it.

"It's unforgivable."

As of 6pm tonight, the website and its contents were still public.

Premier Mark McGowan said the communications system that had been intercepted was switched off when his government was alerted to what was happening.

"The breach of confidential data is associated with the use of a third-party pager service," a spokesman for the Premier said.

"The Department of Health immediately contacted the vendor and asked that the paging component of its service be ceased until the issue is addressed."

Technology expert Trevor Long said he was stunned to see highly-sensitive medical details "flying around" on an unsecured network.

"It's almost outrageous to think that in this modern age these open and public systems would be used to disseminate this sort of information," he said.

"They urgently need to find a better and encrypted way of transferring this sort of information from one health official to another."

"Patient confidentiality is of utmost importance to the Department of Health and the State Government," the Premier's office said.

"The State Government and WA Police are attempting to have the site shut down as quickly as possible."

A review of Health Department data systems is also under way.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 US-backed forces renew Syria campaign
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/us-backed-forces-renew-campaign-against-remnants-eastern-syria
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON - U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched the second phase of a military campaign to destroy remnants of the Islamic State terror group in eastern Syria.</p> <p>The SDF said its "Deterrence of Terrorism" campaign, which was launched Friday, targets IS militants in the eastern Syrian province of Deir el-Zour.</p>

SDF units, backed by the U.S.-led international coalition against IS, have already captured several IS militants, including a senior leader, and seized large quantities of weapons and ammunitions belonging to IS cells, the group's media office said Sunday.

In June, SDF forces launched the first phase of their anti-IS operation in the Syrian province, which borders Iraq. At least 100 IS militants were detained in the weeklong operation, SDF and coalition officials said at the time.

Since its territorial defeat in March 2019, IS has carried out terror attacks against civilians and SDF forces, especially in areas along the border with Iraq.

Coalition support

U.S. military officials said IS militants could no longer hide in Deir el-Zour.

"The SDF-led Deterrence of Terrorism operation is essential to clear ISIS operatives from Deir el-Zour and southern Hasakah," said Col. Myles Caggins, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition against IS, using another acronym for the terror group.

He said the global coalition is supporting the multiday mission with "advising, intelligence sharing, and occasionally partnered special operations."

Caggins told VOA that IS sleeper cells in al-Busaryah and al-Shuhail towns of Deir el-Zour have "harmed local leaders and innocent civilians," adding that "several ISIS lieutenants were captured by the elite antiterrorism commandos."

Local military officials believe the recent surge in IS attacks in eastern Syria is partially because of a security vacuum created during the coronavirus pandemic. Local authorities in Deir el-Zour and elsewhere in eastern Syria have imposed a lockdown on the region to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

Steady-state insurgency

Experts believe the militant group now represents a major insurgent threat throughout the Syrian desert, including Deir el-Zour.

This military campaign "might help to disrupt IS attacks to some degree, but I think we are going to be stuck with a 'steady-state' IS insurgency in the province at best," said Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, a Syria researcher at Swansea University in the U.K.

He told VOA that any actor controlling Deir el-Zour would face the same security challenges.

"These were the longest-held IS areas," al-Tamimi explained, adding that "the security in the wider province is divided between two actors where security cooperation is limited."

The western bank of the Euphrates River, which divides Deir el-Zour, is under the control of the Syrian regime troops and its allied Russian forces and Iranian-backed militias.

US concerned

U.S. military officials have expressed concerns that Syrian and Russian troops in the western part of Deir el-Zour are not capable of stabilizing the region.

"I am concerned because I don't believe they have any concept of stabilization as we know stabilization," Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the commander of U.S. Central Command, told VOA in an interview last week.

	<p>McKenzie, who recently visited Syria and met with SDF officials, said Russian and Syrian forces “have no idea how to actually manage that area after you’ve cleared it militarily.”</p> <p>“The conditions that led to the rise of ISIS still obtain out there in the west... that’s unfortunate, and I am worried about that,” he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 Afghanistan release Taliban prisoners
SOURCE	https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=732589
GIST	<p>Kabul, Jul 21 (IANS): A list of Taliban prisoners held by the Afghan government has revealed that most of the inmates were from the four provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Nangarhar and Farah, the media reported.</p> <p>The list, which was prepared by the National Security Council, seen by TOLO News on Monday shows that the prisoners from all 34 provinces have been released.</p> <p>It indicates that the least number of prisoners were from Panjshir, Bamiyan and Nuristan.</p> <p>Sources close to the Taliban said there has been progress in recent days on the release of 592 prisoners about whom there were disagreements between the government and the militant group.</p> <p>The Afghan government has so far released at least 4,200 Taliban members, while the militants have freed 845 detained security forces.</p> <p>The process is intended to be followed by the intra-Afghan negotiations once the government completes the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners and the Taliban releases 1,000 inmates.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/21 New ISIS leader reputation for brutality
SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/al-mawla-new-isis-leader-has-a-reputation-for-brutality-1.1052241
GIST	<p>With monikers as divergent as the "Professor" and the "Destroyer", ISIS's new head has a reputation for brutality, but otherwise remains largely an enigma.</p> <p>Amir Mohammed Said Abd Al Rahman Al Mawla replaced Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi after his death in a raid by US special forces last October.</p> <p>Al Mawla was initially presented to the world by ISIS as Abu Ibrahim Al Hashimi Al Qurashi – a man about whom America and Iraq had little intelligence.</p> <p>US officials later came to believe that Al Qurashi was Al Mawla's nom de guerre, recognising him in March as the new head of ISIS.</p> <p>The State Department immediately placed him on its Specially Designated Global Terrorist list, sparking a quest to learn more about a most-wanted man who now has a \$10 million bounty on his head.</p> <p>One thing everyone seems to agree on is Al Mawla's brutal nature.</p> <p>He is probably best known for playing "a major role in the campaign of liquidation of the Yazidi minority (of Iraq) through massacres, expulsion and sexual slavery," according to Jean-Pierre Filiu, an extremism analyst at the Sciences Po university in Paris.</p>

The new ISIS leader was born, likely in 1976, in the town of Tal Afar, some 70 kilometres from Mosul.

He was born into a Turkmen family, making him a rare non-Arab to ascend the ranks of ISIS, which at its height ruled vast parts of Iraq and Syria and drew volunteers from the West.

His ethnic origins prompted the United Nations to predict in a January report that he might be a "temporary choice until the group finds a more legitimate 'emir', a direct descendant from the Quraysh Hashemite tribe who could therefore command the full support of the remote provinces."

Al Mawla graduated from the Islamic Sciences College in Mosul.

A former officer in the army of Saddam Hussein, he joined the ranks of Al Qaeda after the US invasion of Iraq and Hussein's capture in 2003, according to the Counter Extremism Project think-tank.

He took on the role of religious commissary and a general Sharia jurist for Al Qaeda.

In 2004, Al Mawla was detained by US forces at the Camp Bucca prison in southern Iraq, where he met Al Baghdadi.

Both men were later freed, and Al Mawla remained at Al Baghdadi's side as he took the reins of the Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda in 2010, then defected to create ISIS.

In 2014, according to the CEP, Al Mawla welcomed Al Baghdadi to Mosul "before leaving Al Qaeda and pledging allegiance and full support to the radical's mission, providing ISIS the support to quickly take control of the city".

A profile drawn up by the CEP said that Al Mawla "quickly established himself among the insurgency's senior ranks, and was nicknamed the 'Professor' and the 'Destroyer'".

He was well respected among ISIS members as a "brutal policymaker" and was responsible for "eliminating those who opposed Al Baghdadi's leadership", it said.

Analysts believe Al Mawla will now seek to prove he is his own man by attempting to reboot an organisation weakened by years of US-led assaults and the loss of its self-proclaimed "caliphate" in Syria last year.

And he may choose to act now that the US is withdrawing troops from Syria.

In a portent of things to come, ISIS fighters have carried out an attack every three days on average in Syria in recent months, according to the Washington-based Centre for Global Policy.

Hisham Al Hashimi, a Baghdad-based specialist on the extremist movement who was assassinated in Baghdad this month, recently estimated the group's monthly revenues in Iraq from investments and taxes it collects at some \$7 million.

"Despite its serious losses in territory and manpower, it remains financially solvent, creative, lethal, and once again confident enough to threaten those who violate its principles," CGP analyst Abdullah Al Ghadhawi wrote.

This means Al Mawla has both the incentive and the means to assert himself.

"There are complaints about him from the field, there are still questions about what kind of organisation he will be running, how competent of a leader he is going to be, how successful he'll be in reconstituting a caliphate, how inspiring he'll be," Seth Jones of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington said.

	<p>"There is going to be a lot of challenges, in inspiring the field but also avoiding to be killed like Al Baghdadi," Mr Jones said.</p> <p>"If he is successful and recreates a caliphate, if the US withdraws its forces, if they're able to capitalise in other countries, that could go a long way to reduce concerns about his background," he warned.</p> <p>While the group's weakened position renders a major strike such as the 2015 assault on Paris unlikely for now, officials should not rule out smaller, less devastating but symbolic attacks on the West, Mr Jones added.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Indonesia jails leaders AQ-linked group
SOURCE	https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/07/20/indonesia-jails-leaders-of-al-qaeda-linked-extremist-group-.html
GIST	<p>Indonesia on Monday jailed two top leaders of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) -- an Al-Qaeda-linked extremist group behind the 2002 Bali bombings -- on terror charges linked to sending militants to fight in Syria.</p> <p>JI leader Para Wijayanto and deputy Budi Trikaryanto were handed seven and six-and-a-half year sentences, respectively, at a Jakarta court hearing done by videoconference due to coronavirus concerns.</p> <p>"The defendants prepared cadres to go to Syria as well as supported them financially while on the mission," presiding judge Alex Adam Faisal told the East Jakarta District Court.</p> <p>The court said Wijayanto, 56, who took over JI's top job in 2009, recruited Indonesians to fight and train with groups, including an Al-Qaeda linked organization, opposed to Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad between 2012 and 2018.</p> <p>The case against Wijayanto and Trikaryanto also included charges of belonging to a banned organization.</p> <p>Indonesia outlawed JI in 2008, making it illegal to belong to the group, and cracked down on its network as the world's biggest Muslim majority nation grappled with a string of extremist attacks.</p> <p>JI has been overshadowed in recent years by militant groups loyal to Islamic State.</p> <p>But the organization was once synonymous with terrorism in Indonesia and has begun to rebuild its membership, according to security experts.</p> <p>The 2002 bombings in a popular Bali entertainment district, which killed over 200 people, remains Indonesia's deadliest terrorist attack.</p> <p>Most victims were foreign holidaymakers from more than 20 countries but Australia suffered the biggest loss, with 88 dead.</p> <p>In subsequent years, JI carried out a string of deadly attacks, including a 2003 car bombing at the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta that killed a dozen and a deadly suicide car bomb the following year outside the Australian embassy.</p> <p>Monday's ruling comes weeks after a married couple with links to Islamic State were jailed over a failed assassination bid to kill Indonesia's former chief security minister Wiranto last year.</p> <p>The Southeast Asian nation's last major militant attack was in 2018 when a family of suicide bombers attacked several churches in its second-biggest city Surabaya, killing a dozen.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Suicide bomber kills 8 Afghan soldiers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suicide-truck-bomber-kills-afghan-soldiers-71879451
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan -- A suicide truck bomber struck an army convoy in eastern Afghanistan on Monday, killing at least eight Afghan soldiers, the Defense Ministry said.</p> <p>Another nine troops were wounded in the attack in Maidan Wardak province. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Taliban and a local Islamic State affiliate routinely target Afghan security forces.</p> <p>The Taliban have stepped up attacks across Afghanistan despite signing a peace deal with the U.S. in February. That agreement was intended to pave the way for talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government leading to an end to decades of war.</p> <p>Those talks were supposed to begin this month, but the process has stalled over the implementation of a prisoner release.</p> <p>The peace deal called for the Afghan government to free 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for the Taliban releasing 1,000 captive government personnel. So far, the government has freed more than 4,200 and the Taliban have freed around 800.</p>
	Return to Top

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Stories police tell; time to reexamine trust?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/stories-the-police-tell-and-how-to-resist-them/
GIST	<p>I can't stop thinking about Manuel Ellis.</p> <p>I keep wondering if it weren't for the global uprising for racial justice in the wake of George Floyd's killing by Minneapolis police, whether Ellis' killing would have passed by mostly unnoticed — as so many have before him — with just the word of the police satisfying a not particularly curious public.</p> <p>It's high time for the public — and the media — to interrogate police statements more aggressively.</p> <p>Tacoma police killed Ellis on March 3, but it wasn't until early June that his case started to get attention. Initially, as is all too common, early stories reported just the Police Department's narrative. Police said Ellis harassed a driver, struck their police car and “slam dunked” an officer to the ground. They attributed his actions to “excited delirium,” a term used by police to justify deadly force but described as “pseudoscience” by critics.</p> <p>It wasn't until mid-June that it was revealed that the Pierce County Sheriff's Office investigating the case — supposedly to create investigatory independence — was at the scene of the killing as well.</p> <p>Video began to emerge that showed officers pummeling Ellis as he gasped, “I can't breathe.” words now tragically familiar. The medical examiner ruled Ellis' death a homicide from oxygen deprivation due to physical restraint.</p> <p>Now under scrutiny by activists, the general public and the media, the governor directed the State Patrol to investigate the killing. The state attorney general is reviewing Ellis' case, as well as 30 other police deadly force incidents.</p>

If we have learned anything from the protest movement of the past two months, we should have at least learned what people of color and other marginalized people have said forever: You can't uncritically trust "official" accounts when it comes to policing and protests.

Efforts to contest and control the Seattle protest narrative began in late May. As my colleague [Danny Westneat wrote](#) in early June, the Seattle police chief and mayor's efforts to paint property destruction from the first days of the protests as the work of mostly white, outside agitators was not supported by facts.

Later, in mid-June, during the height of the media frenzy around the Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP), an assistant Seattle police chief [told the media](#) that protesters were extorting local businesses within the CHOP for money. The claim was repeated by the police chief the next day and then reported by media around the world, [including this paper](#).

The problem was, there turned out to be no police reports alleging extortion.

The source of the claim was a conservative blog citing unnamed police officers. The police walked back the claim, but the damage was done. The extortion claim became a key component in breathless reporting about [lawlessness](#) in CHOP by conservative media, resulting in President Trump calling out the governor and the mayor in a [tweet](#) to "Take back your city NOW. If you don't do it, I will."

The extortion story was one of many police storylines widely reported but unsubstantiated during the weeks of CHOP occupying Capitol Hill. Others included the police chief saying that "calls for [police] service have more than tripled," during CHOP, which may have been an accidental [misstatement](#) but was nonetheless picked up widely in [conservative media](#). Reporting by [The Seattle Times](#) showed that calls near the East Precinct actually dropped 31% in the first two weeks of June.

Seattle police also said in a tweet that "improvised explosives" were thrown at officers, but their tweeted photo of the device showed a [candle](#).

Misinformation is not new. But the speed, ferocity and impact of misinformation that permeates coverage of the protest movement in Seattle and beyond is remarkable. According to media intelligence firm [Signal Labs](#), of 873,000 pieces of George Floyd protest-related misinformation tracked, 575,800 were about antifa being responsible for riots and looting. This misinformation led to armed groups descending on cities and [towns like Snohomish](#) to "protect" them from antifa threats that never materialized.

Joan Donovan is research [director](#) of the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy. She said the media need to do more to broaden their sources to include community members and not just rely on the official narratives.

"I think it's really important," Donovan said, "not just to print the press release, but to try to substantiate any of the claims of politicians and police and police unions in times of high social unrest, because the struggle over the narrative is a proxy war. It's a proxy war between the protesters and the state."

The media have long been complicit in the ["police said"](#) convention in crime reporting, but that practice is getting an overdue revisiting and reckoning, including in this newsroom. Police should not be exempt from the skepticism and rigor we apply to other sources of information. As I remember being taught as a budding journalist long, long ago, "If your mother says she loves you, check it out."

The shift can't come soon enough, as families like Manny Ellis' have tried to get people to hear their calls for justice for years, and too few people have listened.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/what-does-it-mean-to-say-a-new-drug-works/
GIST	<p>JOHN BEIGEL’S PROBLEM was that not enough people were dying of Covid-19. Not that he wanted them to, of course. It’s just that, as bad as the pandemic has gotten, it hasn’t killed as many people as it seemed like it might. And Beigel, a researcher at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, was designing a big study to see if an experimental antiviral drug called remdesivir would work against the disease. He and his team needed the right “end point”—the thing they could count, turn into data, and analyze.</p> <p>Mortality is a great end point. It’s right there in the name.</p> <p>“But when we were thinking of end points, we thought a mortality study would need 3,000 or 4,000 people,” says Beigel, associate director for clinical research in NIAID’s Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. Those high numbers would give his team enough “events”—which is to say, deaths—to get a statistically significant measurement of the drug at work. And they didn’t have enough time to get that many people enrolled in their US study. “We thought it was important to get the study done, to get a clinically meaningful end point, without taking the time we would need to do a mortality study,” he says.</p> <p>This was back in February, before anybody really knew anything about Covid-19. So Beigel’s team tried a different tack, one familiar to scientists and regulatory agencies like the Food and Drug Administration (which issued the Emergency Use Authorization under which people are studying the drug). Participants in the study would get scores, every day, calculated on what’s called an ordinal scale. Healthy and released from the hospital, you get a score of 1. Dead, you get an 8. The other numbers were for everything in between—like whether the person has to get admitted to the hospital or needs oxygen or has to go on a mechanical ventilator.</p> <p>Then they found another problem. “When we first wrote the protocol, the end point chosen was ordinal score at day 15,” Beigel says. “That is something we’ve used for influenza studies before, so we knew the FDA would be OK with it, and is something that actually matters to the subject.” That’s a good end point: It’s not just a statistical entity. It’s long enough to show an effect in many diseases, and it has clear clinical relevance.</p> <p>“In March we started hearing reports that the course of the disease might be much longer, and that there were people in the hospital for three weeks, up to four weeks,” Beigel says. “What happens if the recovery is much later than day 15? You might actually have a significant difference, yet you wouldn’t show it.”</p> <p>So Beigel’s team changed their end point: ordinal score at day 28. They hadn’t seen their data yet when they made the switch. That would’ve been an ethical no-no, chasing statistical significance by juking their methods. But juking ahead of data? Kosher, but they knew it’d be controversial. “It raised suspicion for our study,” Beigel says. “If this was something that is well known, like influenza, and we switched in the middle of the study, that would be really suspicious. For Covid, we haven’t seen anything like this.”</p> <p>In a study published in late May in <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> (and previewed during a press conference at the White House), the team concluded that patients taking remdesivir recovered in a median time of 11 days, while people given a placebo took a median of 15. It was enough to get remdesivir added to the US standard of care, pronto—the first drug identified as having a beneficial effect on the new disease.</p> <p>That sounds like an ending to remdesivir’s story, but it isn’t. Other data on the drug’s effectiveness has an even more slippery relationship with picking the right end points. In the midst of a global crisis, scientists are trying to solve an epistemologically intractable question. Defining whether a drug “works” has never been easy, a task vexed by methodological uncertainty, commercial pressures, statistical errors, or sometimes straight-out bad practices. Facing a new disease, researchers have to rethink what success even <i>means</i>. Is it lower mortality? Less disability upon recovery? Faster recovery? The answers are cryptic because the questions are just educated guesses.</p>

Scientific studies have to reduce all the messiness of the real world to crunchable numbers. But the point of all this, remember, is to find actual treatments that help people fight Covid-19. When a study is over, health care workers have to be able to turn those fine-grain statistics back into something useful, into clinical procedures. That was hard enough in the Before Time. Trying to do useful science on a disease that's only eight months old means coping not only with goalposts that move, but an undulating playing field and rules of the game that keep changing.

“What makes Covid special is that at the time of planning the studies, there's been a lot of uncertainty about trajectory, about the different natural progression of the disease,” says Thomas Jaki, a statistician at Lancaster University who has [written about](#) designing Covid-19 trials. “For setting up and running a trial, especially early in the pandemic, one of the earliest challenges has been around time frame.”

Some researchers aren't even sure that Beigel's NIH-based study says enough about how useful the drug actually is. The NIH paper defined “improvement” as “either discharge from the hospital or hospitalization for infection-control purposes only,” and said the drug reduced the time it took to get that improvement by 31 percent. (It also counted mortality, but just as Beigel and the team worried, didn't show a significant difference.) “Do you think that's clinically very meaningful? I don't know,” says Lee-Jen Wei, a biostatistician at Harvard's School of Public Health, of that four-day difference. “You have to do more than just statistical significance. You need a clinically meaningful improvement. Otherwise why should I bother to pay?”

In June, the CEO of Gilead, the pharmaceutical company that makes remdesivir, wrote an [open letter](#) defending the drug's high cost—\$2,340 for six vials, a full five-day course of treatment. In terms of time-to-improvement, Daniel O'Day wrote, that's good value: “Taking the example of the United States, earlier hospital discharge would result in hospital savings of approximately \$12,000 per patient.”

Beigel, too, says that his group's results meet that minimum level of proof the drug works. “If my parents had the disease, I'd want them to get this drug,” he says. “But we need to do better. That's why we're doing more studies.”

Those more definitive studies might still want to go after mortality as an end point. Other, bigger studies around the world have been able to marshal enough participants to study mortality at a certain time point. In the United Kingdom, the Randomised Evaluation of Covid-19 Therapy (or “[Recovery](#)”) trial has enrolled thousands of people and has released policy-changing studies of the antimalarial drug [hydroxychloroquine](#) (didn't help) and the steroid [dexamethasone](#) (helped). But no central authority has emerged to turn the huge numbers of Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations into the kind of major studies that produce bomb-proof scientific conclusions. Instead, the US has a patchwork of smaller studies that use other end points to get statistical significance.

In fact, the other studies of remdesivir have been, so far, a little less comforting as to the drug's necessity. Gilead funded a study on the appropriate dosing to use against Covid-19—5 days versus 10 days, with the end point being improvement on an ordinal scale on day 14. The difference in how many people in each group improved was negligible; about half the people in both groups improved by two points on the ordinal scale. (The [study](#), conducted around the world and [run by Gilead](#), appeared in *NEJM* just a few days after Beigel's team's work.)

Other researchers have questioned the scientific utility of the Gilead-run dosing study. It makes a little more sense in terms of the economics of marketing the drug, though. “It is extremely unusual to test two dosings of a drug when you don't know whether it works at all, but it is highly strategic,” says Peter Bach, a physician and head of the Drug Pricing Lab at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. “From the company's perspective, there's billions in them there hills if they can get a positive study. But if it's a negative study, it's a tough row to hoe.”

In other words, Bach says, if Gilead does a robust, rigorous study of its own drug, the company can't win. If the NIH's result is good news, as it was, the company has wasted time and money confirming it. If it's

bad news, Gilead's positive results don't help. And if Gilead found that the drug didn't work as well as the NIH's study said, well, that's even more bad.

Again, though, Beigel's group at the NIH is already doing that rigorous evaluation. In fact, says a Gilead spokesperson, that's part of why they skipped to studying dosing. "Our goal with these studies was to answer the question of treatment duration," emails Chris Ridley, senior director for media relations at Gilead. "Due to the overburdening of health care systems, the limited current supply of remdesivir, and the unestablished safety profile of remdesivir in this population, the ability to shorten treatment duration without reducing efficacy was an important question." A five-day course would mean treatment is less expensive, and it would spread the limited supply of the drug out around the world. (Except that the US government [quickly bought](#) most of the global supply.)

That's capitalism for you. Without these economic constraints, maybe Gilead could have mounted a bigger study to get at mortality more clearly. "This is what I've been lamenting. It's the incentives themselves. The pharma industry's acolytes and legions of economists who make money off the drug industry say it's important that we pay high prices for drugs, to encourage innovation," Bach says. "It also puts checks on doing the most rigorous evaluation of your hypotheses."

But there's more. In early July, Gilead researchers also presented a different cut of the study from which they'd taken the dosing data. This time they aimed not at ordinal status but for the ostensibly more clarifying end point of mortality. But the company released that data not as a peer-reviewed journal article or even a preprint, but as a conference poster and then as a [press release](#). The Gilead data compared outcomes for 312 people with severe Covid-19 not to a randomized control group getting a placebo, but with a "retrospective cohort" of 818 people who did not participate in the study but had severe Covid-19 and got standard-of-care hospital treatment, without remdesivir. According to the company, the mortality rate was 7.6 percent on the drug and 12.5 percent without it, measured at day 14 of treatment.

This is weird for all sorts of reasons. First, if you don't randomize the cohorts in a trial—who gets the drug and who gets the placebo, as a control—you risk the two groups getting different treatment. Sicker people might get more attention, or overall protocols might vary from hospital to hospital. That makes the two groups fundamentally incomparable. "Even in the absolute best of circumstances, we really struggle to do this and convince ourselves that what we're seeing is a signal of the drug's effect, as opposed to any number of confusing or confounding factors," Bach says.

For something like Covid-19—when even [mortality rates](#) have ranged from small to upwards of 15 percent depending on when and where you look around the world—it's even more challenging. And as the disease has spread, hospitals have altered their therapeutic approaches, changing when people go on ventilators, whether they lay on their backs or stomachs in bed, whether they get steroids, and so on. That means that subjects enrolled at the beginning of a study might get different treatment than subjects who enroll later. Again: very hard to compare outcomes.

Gilead's July data-squirt didn't account for any of that—because, says their spokesperson, the company wasn't able to make enough of the non-drug they'd use in the trial as a placebo. "In the early stages of the pandemic, we not only had a limited supply of remdesivir but also a limited supply of the matched placebo required for placebo-controlled studies. We chose to prioritize manufacturing active drug over placebo, and we provided our supply of placebo to China and NIAID for their studies of remdesivir," Ridley writes. "While the mortality benefit seen in this data analysis presented at the Virtual Covid-19 Conference (AIDS 2020: Virtual) is encouraging, it requires confirmation in prospective clinical trials."

Observers indeed agree that further confirmation is necessary. "It's literally not worthy of comment. It's silly," Bach says. "It just fails the most basic test for when you would want to rely on such an analysis." (Even so, the announcement [buoyed](#) the entire US stock market, and goosed Gilead's share price by 2 percent.)

So all these studies will continue. It's still hard to know, exactly, how much real benefit remdesivir confers. Beigel's team at NIH is still crunching the daily data—including virology and lab results—they

	collected from their cohorts. They've finished enrolling people into a study of the combined use of remdesivir and an anti-inflammatory drug called baricitinib. Gilead's spokesperson says a fuller, peer-reviewed version of their mortality study is under review at a journal. Unbelievable as it may seem, the pandemic is still in its early stages. No one is anywhere near the end point.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Researchers: polar bears face extinction
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/20/climate/polar-bear-extinction.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Climate%20and%20Environment
GIST	<p>Polar bears could become nearly extinct by the end of the century as a result of shrinking sea ice in the Arctic if global warming continues unabated, scientists said Monday.</p> <p>Nearly all of the 19 subpopulations of polar bears, from the Beaufort Sea off Alaska to the Siberian Arctic, would face being wiped out because the loss of sea ice would force the animals onto land and away from their food supplies for longer periods, the researchers said. Prolonged fasting, and reduced nursing of cubs by mothers, would lead to rapid declines in reproduction and survival.</p> <p>“There is very little chance that polar bears would persist anywhere in the world, except perhaps in the very high Arctic in one small subpopulation” if greenhouse-gas emissions continue at so-called business-as-usual levels, said Peter K. Molnar, a researcher at the University of Toronto Scarborough and lead author of the study, which was published Monday in the journal Nature Climate Change.</p> <p>Even if emissions were reduced to more moderate levels, “we still are unfortunately going to lose some, especially some of the southernmost populations, to sea-ice loss,” Dr. Molnar said.</p> <p>The fate of polar bears has long been a flash point in the debate over human-caused climate change, used by scientists and environmentalists as well as deniers in their arguments.</p> <p>By rough estimates there are about 25,000 polar bears in the Arctic. Their main habitat is sea ice, where they hunt seals by waiting for them to surface at holes in the ice. In some areas the bears remain on the ice year round, but in others the melting in spring and summer forces them to come ashore.</p> <p>“You need the sea ice to capture your food,” Dr. Molnar said. “There’s not enough food on land to sustain a polar bear population.” But bears can fast for months, surviving on the energy from the fat they’ve built up thanks to their seal diet.</p> <p>Arctic sea ice grows in the winter and melts and retreats in spring and summer. As the region has warmed rapidly in recent decades, ice extent in summer has declined by about 13 percent per decade compared to the 1981-2010 average. Some parts of the Arctic that previously had ice year-round now have ice-free periods in summer. Other parts are now free of ice for a longer portion of the year than in the past.</p> <p>Dr. Molnar and his colleagues looked at 13 of the subpopulations representing about 80 percent of the total bear population. They calculated the bears’ energy requirements in order to determine how long they could survive — or, in the case of females, survive and nurse their cubs — while fasting.</p> <p>Combining that with climate-model projections of ice-free days to 2100 if present rates of warming continue, they determined that, for almost all of the subgroups, the time that the animals would be forced to fast would eventually exceed the time that they are capable of fasting.</p> <p>In short, the animals would starve.</p> <p>“There’s going to be a time point when you run out of energy,” Dr. Molnar said.</p>

Compounding the problem is that a longer fasting time also means a shorter feeding period. “Not only do the bears have to fast for longer and need more energy to get through this, they also have a harder time to accumulate this energy,” he said.

While fasting, bears move as little as possible to conserve energy. But sea-ice loss and population declines create new problems — having to expend more energy searching for a mate, for example — that could further affect survival.

Even under more modest warming projections, in which greenhouse gas emissions peak by 2040 and then begin to decline, many of the subgroups would still be wiped out, the research showed.

Over the years, polar bears have become a symbol both for those who argue that urgent action on global warming is needed and for those who claim that climate change is not happening or, at best, that the issue is overblown.

Groups including the Cato Institute, a libertarian research organization that challenges aspects of climate change, have called concerns about the bears unwarranted, arguing that some research shows that the animals have survived repeated warm periods. But scientists say during earlier warm periods the bears probably had significant alternative food sources, notably whales, that they do not have today.

Poignant images of bears on isolated ice floes or roaming land in search of food have been used by conservation groups and others to showcase the need for action to reduce warming. Occasionally, though, these images have been shown to be not what they seem.

After a video of an emaciated bear picking through garbage cans in the Canadian Arctic was posted online by National Geographic in 2017, the magazine acknowledged that the bear’s condition might not be related to climate change. Scientists had pointed out that there was no way of knowing what was wrong with the bear; it might have been sick or very old.

The new research did not include projections in which emissions were reduced drastically, said Cecilia M. Bitz, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Washington and an author of the study. The researchers needed to be able to determine, as precisely as possible, the periods when sea ice would be gone from a particular region. “If we had wanted to look at many models we wouldn’t have been able to do that,” Dr. Bitz said.

Andrew Derocher, a polar bear researcher at the University of Alberta who was not involved in the study, said the findings “are very consistent with what we’re seeing” from, for instance, monitoring the animals in the wild. “The study shows clearly that polar bears are going to do better with less warming,” he added. “But no matter which scenario you look at, there are serious concerns about conservation of the species.”

Of the 19 subpopulations, little is known about some of them, particularly those in the Russian Arctic. Of subpopulations that have been studied, some — generally those in areas with less ice loss — have shown little population decline so far. But others, notably in the southern Beaufort Sea off northeastern Alaska, and in the western Hudson Bay in Canada, have been severely affected by loss of sea ice.

[One analysis](#) found that the Southern Beaufort Sea subpopulation declined by 40 percent, to about 900 bears, in the first decade of this century.

Dr. Derocher said one drawback with studies like these is that, while they can show the long-term trends, “it becomes very difficult to model what is happening from year to year.”

Polar bear populations can be very susceptible to drastic year-to-year changes in conditions, he said. “One of the big conservation challenges is that one or two bad years can take a population that is healthy and push it to really low levels.”

[Return to](#)[Top](#)

HEADLINE	07/20 Explosion hits power plant in Iran
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-power-plant-explosion/
GIST	<p>An explosion hit a power plant in the central Iranian province of Isfahan on Sunday, state news agency IRNA reported, saying it was over faulty equipment and caused no casualties. A "worn out transformer... at Isfahan's Islamabad thermal power plant exploded at around 5:00 am today," the managing director of Isfahan's electricity company Said Mohseni told the agency.</p> <p>The facility returned to normal working conditions after about two hours and Isfahan's power supply was uninterrupted, he added.</p> <p>The incident is the latest in a string of fires and explosions at military and civilian sites across Iran in recent weeks.</p> <p>Two explosions rocked Tehran in late June, one near a military site and the other in a health center, the latter killing 19 people.</p> <p>Fires or blasts also hit a shipyard in southern Iran last week, a factory south of Tehran with two dead and the Natanz nuclear complex in central Iran earlier this month.</p> <p>Iranian authorities called the Natanz fire an accident without elaborating and later said they would not reveal the cause, citing "security reasons."</p> <p>The string of fires and explosions have prompted speculation in Iran that they may be the result of sabotage by arch enemy Israel.</p> <p>The Jewish state accuses the Islamic republic of seeking to acquire a nuclear bomb while Tehran insists its nuclear program is entirely peaceful.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 'Very rare' illness spreads in Denver
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/trench-fever-spread-by-lice-is-found-in-denvers-homeless?ref=home
GIST	<p>DENVER—Dr. Michelle Barron, medical director of infection prevention and control at UCHHealth University of Colorado Hospital, received an unusual call last month from the microbiology lab: confirmation of the third case this year of trench fever, a rare condition transmitted by body lice that plagued soldiers during World War I.</p> <p>Barron's epidemiological training kicked in.</p> <p>"Two is always an outbreak, and then when we found a third—OK, we clearly have something going on," Barron recalled thinking.</p> <p>Barron, who said she'd never before seen a case in her 20 years here, contacted state public health officials, who issued an advisory Thursday and said a fourth person with a suspected case had been identified. They asked physicians to be on the lookout for additional cases.</p> <p>Trench fever is characterized by relapsing fever, bone pain (particularly in the shins), headache, nausea, vomiting and malaise. Some of those infected can develop skin lesions or a life-threatening infection of their heart valves.</p>

The condition is caused by the bacterium *Bartonella quintana*, a close relative of the bug that causes cat scratch fever. Colonies of it live in the digestive systems of body lice and are excreted in their feces. The bugs can enter the body through a scratch in the skin or through the eyes or nose. Dried lice feces can be infectious for up to 12 months.

Trench fever is most commonly diagnosed among people experiencing homelessness or living in conditions where good hygiene is difficult. Those with compromised immune systems are particularly at risk.

Public health officials are trying to find a common thread among the four cases identified so far in Colorado. They occurred months apart, and the patients appear to have no connection other than having been homeless in the Denver area.

Other cases of the disease may have been overlooked. This outbreak comes, after all, at a time when much attention is being diverted to the coronavirus pandemic. But the economic fallout of that crisis could be fueling the outbreak of an illness that thrives on hardship.

Trench fever can be an easy diagnosis to miss, Barron said. Patients often have other health problems that could explain their symptoms, and doctors will try to rule out the more common causes before considering a rare one.

Moreover, the bacteria grow very slowly in lab cultures—it can take up to 21 days, and labs usually discard cultures after seven days. Barron said the bacteria in two of the confirmed cases grew just before the cell cultures were due to be thrown out.

Doctors will often treat the symptoms of a disease like trench fever with antibiotics. If the patient heals, it's possible no tests will be pursued to determine the organism causing the illness, said Dr. Kristy Murray, an infectious disease specialist with Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

"With this particular disease, unless you work in a setting where you're with the homeless all the time, you're not thinking about it or looking for it," she said. "It is very rare."

Nonetheless, in recent years, outbreaks have occurred in San Francisco and Seattle homeless camps. Barry Pittendrigh, a Michigan State University entomologist who was part of an international collaborative studying the lice that cause trench fever, said head lice can also carry the bacteria, but their immune systems are strong enough to keep it in check. Body lice live in clothing, coming on and off to feed on the body. Their immune systems aren't as strong, he said, so the bacteria can flourish.

"We see scenarios when social crises are occurring—wars, economic downturn, displacement of people—when there is this chance that we'll have problems around hygiene that, in turn, these louse populations take off and you get these diseases," Pittendrigh said.

A spike in body lice occurred during the 2008 recession, he said, and before that, during the Great Depression and the two world wars. The current economic and health disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to another increase.

As public health agencies struggle with the coronavirus, fewer resources are left to track down outbreaks of other infectious diseases.

Colorado is committed to battling both issues, said state health department spokesperson Deanna Herbert. "We are continuing to grow the COVID-19 response staff, which allows us to balance other outbreaks and needs with responding to the global pandemic," she wrote in an email. "Scaling to the size we have is a tremendous undertaking, but we have a staff that is absolutely committed to being as responsive as possible to the needs of all Coloradans."

	<p>Murray said an outbreak often can be interrupted with outreach to homeless shelters and other groups that provide services to those living on the street. Mobile showers or offering to launder or replace their clothes can help. Body lice can be killed by washing and drying clothes at high temperatures—at least 130 degrees Fahrenheit.</p> <p>The pesticide permethrin can also be used to treat clothing, bedding and backpacks to prevent lice infestation. Most people don't need to worry, though: According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, infestation is unlikely to persist on anyone who bathes regularly and switches to clean clothes and bedding every week.</p> <p>Still, trench fever has been considered a reemerging disease since the 1990s.</p> <p>“Old infectious diseases always still have the potential to come back,” Barron said. “Even though we live in a society that we consider very modern and very safe on so many levels, these organisms, at the end of the day, have been here longer than us and plan to survive.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Workers terrified enforcing mask rules
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/walmart-target-workers-are-terrified-of-enforcing-mask-rules?ref=home?ref=home
GIST	<p>Even in a time of record unemployment, some of Dan's colleagues at an Indiana Walmart have walked off the job. They aren't quitting over fears of catching COVID-19, he explained. They're quitting because of customers who become abusive when asked to wear face masks.</p> <p>“A lot of our people have been verbally harassed to the point of breaking down and just quitting,” Dan, who like other workers interviewed in this story used a pseudonym to avoid retaliation from his employer, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>If anything, jobs like Dan's are about to get even more complicated.</p> <p>On Monday, Walmart will begin mandating protective face masks—a policy that some stores already enforced based on local guidelines or management's discretion. But the much-needed protection for workers comes with a catch: As masking has gone from common-sense gesture to culture war frontier, with right-wing figures and conspiracy theorists denouncing the protective gear, some customers are simply refusing to wear face masks—or worse.</p> <p>That leaves workers at stores like Target, Walmart, and Kroger—where employees have already battled shoppers over masks—bracing for a summer of customer service hell.</p> <p>Dan's Walmart already had masking rules on the books before the nationwide announcements, he said, and workers were already sick of trying to enforce them.</p> <p>“Our general feeling is that we don't get paid enough to deal with it,” he told The Daily Beast, noting that he worked at a “high risk/high theft” store. “Everyday we're threatened, sometimes physically assaulted and harassed daily. Even if we try to enforce it, customers can just say they have a medical reason or religious reason to not wear a mask.”</p> <p>Although some shoppers likely object to the masks simply because they don't like wearing them, others have, for months now, been increasingly refashioning masks as a political symbol.</p> <p>Fox News host Laura Ingraham memorably tweeted that wearing masks would make everyone “like Antifa,” the anti-fascist activists who have become a constant focus of rage within Fox and the Trump administration. Although some conservative governors have recently instituted mask mandates, Trump himself declined to publicly wear a mask until this past week, by which point more than 130,000</p>

Americans had died of COVID-19. Previously, he retweeted a Fox News analyst who mocked Joe Biden for wearing a mask. [When the president was required](#) to wear a mask during a tour of a Ford plant in May, he pulled the mask down while in front of cameras because he “didn't want to give the press the pleasure of seeing it.”

Some health conspiracy theories, many of them popular on the far right, have either falsely claimed masks were dangerous, or that anti-maskers could invent bogus medical conditions to avoid wearing protection.

The result is incidents like [one that went viral in mid-May](#), when a prominent Flat Earth conspiracy theorist filmed herself yelling at a grocery store worker who told her she had no medical basis to enter the store unmasked.

Walmart said that, while it was actively evaluating the safest path forward for workers, it was currently [training some staff as “Health Ambassadors”](#) to deal with customers.

“Our Ambassadors are receiving special de-escalation training to help make the process as smooth as possible for customers,” a Walmart spokesperson told The Daily Beast. “They will work with customers who show up without a face covering to try and find a solution. There is not a uniform solution, because there is not a uniform approach to each situation. In many of our stores we have also repurposed our third party security resources to assist in reminding customers to wear masks. Since it may not be possible for all customers to wear masks, our Ambassadors are also trained on how to best handle exceptions to reduce friction.”

Steven, a Walmart employee in Michigan, said his store has already begun using door workers to ask customers to mask up.

“I have been on the door two days so far, not long,” he said on Thursday. On one of those days, “I asked a customer if they had a mask, and she walked by me, completely ignored me as if I did not exist. Another one swore, ‘That's fucking bullshit, and fuck this place.’ One customer replied in a hostile tone, ‘You can't make me,’” he recalled.

Two of his coworkers experienced the same or worse, Steven added, with one having seen mask-wearing customers performatively sneeze at her. “They were expressing their contempt,” Steven said. “She said one customer spit at her. Another associate working before me said she has customers swear at her, ‘Fuck you.’ Repeatedly.”

The experience is not unique to Walmart. Target also announced a nationwide masking policy this past week. The rule will take effect Aug. 1. Julia, a Target worker in Ohio, said many of her colleagues had, at least until now, been reluctant to ask customers to wear masks, due to intimidation from those shoppers.

One of her managers “told a woman that we now require face masks in the store and the guest just yelled ‘go F*** yourself’ and walked out,” Julia told The Daily Beast via email. “I watched another manager simply tell another lady that we required them and she just yelled, ‘I have a doctor's note’ and walked off.”

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which represents some stores with newly mandatory masking, like Kroger supermarkets, said the masks were a good policy to protect workers, but that enforcement should be left to trained security.

“Kroger's action to mandate masks for customers is long overdue and an important step that UFCW has been calling for since the beginning of the pandemic,” UFCW President Marc Perrone said in a statement. “To help save lives, every retailer and grocery store across this nation must adopt a mask requirement, and enforcement must be done by trained professionals, not retail workers already stretched thin during this crisis.”

The risks for retail workers—who did not sign up to act as de facto bouncers when they took the job—is real. [On July 11](#), a Walmart shopper pulled a gun when asked to mask. [Days later](#), on the first day a

Louisiana Walmart required masks, another man had a meltdown when asked to wear a mask, allegedly driving his truck into a police officer who arrived on the scene.

Of course, as workers noted, customer tantrums predate COVID-19's arrival in the U.S. Hannah, a Walmart worker, said a store where she previously worked made national news this year after a woman was arrested there in March for allegedly trying to build and detonate a nail bomb with items she'd pulled from the shelves. (Julia said her Target store "already had two knife incidents just last year alone," completely unrelated to the pandemic.)

Hannah said she initially worried about worker safety enforcing the masks, but that management in her store was stepping up and shouldering most of the confrontations. Her current store experiences fewer customer outbursts than her previous one, which was the site of the nail bomb incident.

"I think people are understanding now that customer hosts [Walmart's name for door workers] are essential and [are] there to do their job and provide good customer service in the midst of COVID-19," she said.

Kate said she didn't think Walmart would ask cashiers like her to do most of the enforcement, either. "They're going to expect enforcement to be done by people in management positions and asset protection," she said.

But, Kate noted, "a lot of employees feel like it's just Walmart posturing for public effect and management won't do anything about people who aren't complying."

Worst of all, some of the workers said they worried their stores' new policies would actually ramp up the rate of conflicts—without giving them new deescalation powers.

"I actually worry with a more official policy from Target, that we will have more angry people," Julia said. "But even Target making it mandatory won't do much because what would they have us do? We could refuse to help guests but then they've most likely already walked around the store anyway. Our AP [asset protection] has no way to stop guests from actually coming into our store, they aren't allowed to physically touch anyone and if the person decides to ignore us asking them to leave, the only thing we can do is call the police, which we aren't allowed to do."

Target did not return a request for comment.

Dan, the Indiana Walmart worker, said he worried the company's new policy was a paper tiger, there to appease customers who wanted masks, but with no real enforcement mechanism.

"Walmart put an order in without giving us any real way of enforcing it," he said. "They always bend over backwards for the customer no matter the circumstances. Associates feel helpless and scared to go to work to barely make anything compared to the people on unemployment.

"It's bullshit and not fair."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	07/21 Central District shooting; 1 dead, 2 hurt
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/one-dead-two-injured-in-central-district-shooting
GIST	SEATTLE - One person is dead and two others are injured after a shooting in Seattle's Central District neighborhood.

	<p>Seattle Police were called to the scene around 11 p.m. Monday at 23rd Avenue and Cherry Street near an ARCO gas station.</p> <p>The victims or suspect have not been identified. The condition of the two shot have also not been released at this time.</p> <p>Detectives are investigating the incident and will provide more information when available on the shooting.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 King Co. prosecutor on protest arrests
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2033398/king-county-prosecutor-charges-protests-arrests/
GIST	<p>One of several demands from groups calling for defunding police and ending systemic racism is to release all demonstrators arrested in connection with recent protests, including during the occupation of the CHAZ/CHOP area on Capitol Hill.</p> <p>Last month, Mayor Durkan called on the city attorney's office not to charge those arrested for peacefully protesting during any of the demonstrations. Earlier this month, she sent a letter to King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg calling on his office to continue declining to file charges for those picked up in relation to peacefully protesting.</p> <p>Satterberg says his office was already on that path from the outset, and wants to set the record straight about what happens when someone is picked up during a protest.</p> <p>"There is widespread confusion about the process," he noted.</p> <p>In order to provide some clarity, he laid out what typically happens after protests where arrests are made.</p> <p><i>When someone is arrested, and they're brought to jail, sometimes the jail will even say 'so and so has been charged,' but it's the prosecutors job to charge. It's not the police who do that. So typically what has happened over the last several months is that if there is an arrest that happens during a protest, the police may book somebody in jail, but they're almost always released the very first moment that they could be, and certainly no later than 24 hours when they see a judge, so that's not a charge. That's someone who's been arrested, and booked, and released.</i></p> <p>So even if the jail booking says "charged," that does not mean that person has officially charged with a crime by the prosecutor's office. If there is someone Satterberg's office decides to charge it works like this:</p> <p>"Then we have a 72-hour period for the police detective to rush file a case with us, to bring us a case that we can then get a judge to sign off on within 72 hours. We have filed 15 of those kinds of cases that have something to do with the protests. But we have not charged anybody with a felony for their participation in a protest."</p> <p>The 15 cases his office has filed are not for people who were peacefully protesting.</p> <p>"The cases that we have filed include burglaries in the first couple of nights of unrest when some of the businesses were broken into, or later on, Bellevue Square businesses were broken into. We've certainly filed cases involving the shooting that happened and also the vehicular homicide, as well as cases involving illegal guns, and harm, so they're pretty limited," Satterberg said.</p> <p>"Our rule in our office, first of all, the principle that protesting and airing your grievances against the government, that's a sacred American right, and you shouldn't go to a protest and then come home with a felony because things got out of hand," he added.</p>

Even those who hurled projectiles at officers during protests have not been charged by his office.

“There are obviously tensions that mount and certainly were the first week or so of June when police were pushing back on the line; so protesters, we’re not going to file any of those cases that are referred to us as an ‘assault three’ against an officer, not without seeing all of the video that’s out there,” Satterberg explained.

“We’re no strangers to these protests — we’ve had May Day riots and the WTO protests, and so we know that there is video of these incidents and we’re not going to file a serious felony case against somebody without reviewing that video and making sure that it’s a strong case. So far, we have not filed any of those cases,” he continued.

As for the broader conversation about reforming policing and the criminal justice system, Satterberg is no stranger to such efforts, with his advocacy of the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, as well as policies to not prosecute people busted with a gram or less of any drug that he put in place back in 2018.

That being so, he believes the current conversation about police reform is needed.

It’s a moment where we can reimagine the response that we might be able to build. I think it is a good case to be made that we over-rely on police and jail and courts and prosecution for complicated social issues. It’s become the default response for drug addiction and mental illness and homelessness and school misconduct. I think there’s some good conversations to have, but it’s a process. It’s not going to happen overnight. We need to build up the other responses, we need to invest in and train more social workers with stabilizing services to respond to some of these human crises. They may also need to have security there when they show up so it’s not going to happen overnight.

The groups pushing to defund police also want a path to life without policing – but that’s not a future Satterberg can see happening.

“We’re not going to eliminate the police; there’s too much violence on our streets right now. We’re always going to need detectives to solve murder cases and sexual assault cases, we can’t outsource our response to everything,” Satterberg said.

Satterberg says to some degree, all agencies are going to be forced to rethink how they handle criminal justice.

“It’s [the conversation] happening at a time of COVID, when local government budgets are getting hammered, and I’ve been told to take a \$9 million cut from my office in the next biennium,” he pointed out. “So we’re not going to be able to continue to do everything for everybody. We’re going to have to really talk about inside my office what are the things that we can continue to do well, and what are the things that we shouldn’t do at all? How do we continue to do our work with \$9 million less in the next two years.”

That provides opportunity.

“It’s an historic opportunity to use our imagination and design the community that we want, and the response that we want to things that are maybe not criminal, but they’re where we have built an over relied on a criminal response. I would like to see a lot more help for people with drug addiction and mental illness and homelessness, and that doesn’t necessarily have to be a police officer who responds. In fact, good arguments could be made that other disciplines would be better to handle those complicated social problems,” Satterberg said.

	<p>These criminal justice and police reform conversations stretch outside of the local region all the way to Olympia. Among the discussions going on at the statewide level: enhancing the decertification process for officers.</p> <p><i>As a lawyer, the bar association both gives me my license, but they also can discipline an attorney up to the point of disbaring that attorney for misconduct. The Criminal Justice Training Commission does not do that and the commission issues the ability to be a police officer but has a very small process for the decertification of officers, so there's a lot of different conversations out there, and at the same time the state budgets going to get hit. I think that there's a desire to continue to reduce the number of people in prison and our King County jail population, which went from 1900 to 1300 [due to COVID] that needs to stay at 1300 or lower, just so that the staff and the people who are incarcerated can be safer.</i></p> <p>Bottom line, Satterberg describes this all as a “huge moment,” where people should feel free to protest.</p> <p>“We’re just at the beginning of all of this,” he said. “It requires us to use our imagination, and to not make things worse, and frankly, I think, filing a bunch of cases against protesters who went to a protest and came home with a felony charge ... that would be the wrong thing to do right now.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 US blacklists China firms; human rights
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/20/business/economy/china-sanctions-ughurs-labor.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Monday barred 11 new Chinese companies from purchasing American technology and products without a special license, saying the firms were complicit in human rights violations in China’s campaign targeting Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region.</p> <p>The list of sanctioned companies includes current and former suppliers to major international brands such as Apple, Ralph Lauren, Google, HP, Tommy Hilfiger, Hugo Boss and Muji, according to a report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a think tank established by the Australian government. The group cited the websites of the sanctioned Chinese companies, which mentioned their financial relationships with major American brands.</p> <p>The administration’s announcement could precipitate more efforts by prominent clothing and technology brands to sever ties with opaque supply chains that touch on Xinjiang, a major source of cotton, textiles, petrochemicals and other goods that feed into Chinese factories.</p> <p>Human rights groups and journalists have documented a campaign of mass detentions carried out by the Chinese government in Xinjiang, in which one million or more members of Muslim and other minority groups have been placed into large internment camps intended to increase their loyalty to the Communist Party. Some of these detainees are forced to work in factories in or near the camps, often processing Xinjiang’s abundant cotton crop into various textiles that may then be funneled into international supply chains.</p> <p>A Times video investigation identified Chinese companies using a contentious labor program for Muslim Uighurs to satisfy demand for face masks and other personal protective equipment, some of which ended up in the United States and other countries.</p> <p>Nine of the companies that the Trump administration cited on Monday, including Changji Esquel Textile Co. Ltd., Nanchang O-Film Tech and Hetian Taida Apparel Co. Ltd., were added to the so-called entity list for their use of forced labor, the Commerce Department said. Two other companies, Xinjiang Silk Road BGI and Beijing Liuhe BGI, were added for conducting genetic analyses that were used to further the repression of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, according to the announcement.</p>

The blacklist only prevents U.S. companies from selling components or technologies to Chinese companies without a license, not from purchasing products. In practice, however, major international brands are unlikely to continue doing business with any firm named on a government list for forced labor or other abuses in Xinjiang.

“Beijing actively promotes the reprehensible practice of forced labor and abusive DNA collection and analysis schemes to repress its citizens,” Wilbur Ross, the secretary of commerce, said in a statement. “This action will ensure that our goods and technologies are not used in the Chinese Communist Party’s despicable offensive against defenseless Muslim minority populations.”

The move comes amid [rising tensions](#) between the United States and China, and less than two weeks after the administration [imposed sanctions](#) on multiple Chinese officials for aiding in human rights abuses.

Mr. Trump held off on sanctions over China’s treatment of its Uighur minority for much of 2018 and 2019 [in the interest of closing a trade deal](#) with China, which he [signed in January](#). Since then, the Trump administration has become more critical of China, blaming it for not doing enough to contain the coronavirus and [rebuking a new security law](#) that increases Beijing’s control over Hong Kong.

The announcement on Monday is the latest step in the administration’s campaign to bar Chinese companies from buying products from American companies. The United States had previously placed 37 companies on its entity list for violations related to Xinjiang. The Trump administration has also sanctioned a variety of Chinese technology companies, including [Huawei](#), for national security threats.

One of the companies sanctioned on Monday, Nanchang O-Film Tech, has said that it manufactured selfie cameras for some models of the iPhone, as well as other camera and touch screen components for Huawei, Lenovo and Samsung.

In December 2017, Tim Cook, Apple’s chief executive, visited O-Film’s Guangzhou factory, posting a picture of himself on the Chinese social media platform Weibo, according to the report from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

“Getting a closer look at the remarkable, precision work that goes into manufacturing the selfie cameras for iPhone 8 and iPhone X at O-Film,” the post read. According to a O-Film news release that has since been deleted, Mr. Cook praised the company’s “human approach towards employees” and said the workers seemed to be living “happily,” according to the ASPI report.

Before that visit, 700 Uighurs were transferred from Xinjiang to work at an O-Film factory in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, a move that was expected to “gradually alter their ideology” and increase their “gratitude toward the Party and contribute to stability,” the ASPI report said, citing a Xinjiang newspaper.

It remains unclear whether the government in Xinjiang ultimately supplied more workers to O-Film. Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment. O-Film could not immediately be reached for comment.

Another company on the list, Hefei Bitland Information Technology Co, has said on its website that its cooperative partners include Google, HP, Haier, iFlytek and Lenovo. Another listed company, Changji Esquel Textile Co. Ltd, also appears to have ties to major international brands, working with Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Hugo Boss and Muji, according to the Chinese company’s website.

PVH, which owns the Tommy Hilfiger brand, Ralph Lauren, Hugo Boss and a representative for Muji in the United States, where the brand is restructuring, did not immediately return requests for comment on Monday.

[The Wall Street Journal reported](#) in May 2019 that Esquel had set up three spinning mills in Xinjiang, and that the company had taken in at least 34 Uighur workers offered by Chinese officials. In a [statement](#) this

	<p>April, Esquel denied that it had ever used forced labor and called the statements “completely false and deeply upsetting.”</p> <p>In a letter to Mr. Ross on Monday, Esquel again said it did not and would never use forced labor, and asked to be removed from the list.</p> <p>“Where is the evidence that Esquel has ever, in its 25 years of operations in Xinjiang, used forced labor?” wrote John Cheh, the chief executive of Esquel Group. “No agency of any government nor any nongovernmental organization has presented such evidence, because it does not exist. In the lead up to including our Changji mill on the entity list, no one from the Commerce Department spoke with anyone at Esquel or we would have gladly provided them with the facts and answered any questions at that time.”</p> <p>The companies on the entity list also include KTK Group, which supplies components for high-speed trains, and Hetian Haolin Hair Accessories Co. Ltd. On July 1, U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized a shipment of 13 tons of hair products manufactured by Lop County Meixin Hair Product Co. Ltd. that it suspected were made with human hair originating in Xinjiang.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Violent crime surges in Atlanta
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/violent-crime-surges-in-atlanta-amid-rising-unemployment-tensions-over-policing-11595237400?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>A recent wave of violent crime has roiled the city of Atlanta, amplifying tensions in a community still reeling from the coronavirus pandemic and a debate over policing and race.</p> <p>The uptick in gun violence has mirrored a trend in cities across the U.S., such as Chicago, New York and Philadelphia, where police departments reported a higher number of shootings and homicides compared with the same period last year.</p> <p>But Atlanta has seen a particularly dramatic rise in violent crime, compounding the unrest in a city that has been a center of protests over police brutality and racial justice.</p> <p>As of July 11, 106 people were shot over a 28-day period, marking a sharp increase from 40 people during the same period in 2019, according to data compiled by the Atlanta Police Department.</p> <p>Victims who have died this month include 30-year-old Rudolph Johnson, a rising Atlanta rapper known as Lil Marlo, as well as an 8-year-old girl.</p> <p>A spokesman for the southeast regional International Brotherhood of Police Officers, the Atlanta police union, didn’t respond to requests for comment. But the union has publicly stated that officers have stopped policing as aggressively, after what they see as an antipolice sentiment developed among local officials after the killing of Rayshard Brooks by an Atlanta police officer in a Wendy’s parking lot on June 12.</p> <p>Sgt. John Chafee, a spokesman for the Atlanta Police Department, declined to address the causes of the increased violence, calling the recent surge in homicides “especially concerning to us,” and “something we will not tolerate.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, political leaders have sparred over the question—and how best to respond to the violence.</p> <p>Last week, Gov. Brian Kemp, who decried recent violence as a “trend of lawlessness,” extended until July 27 a state of emergency that authorized the deployment of up to 1,000 National Guard troops in Georgia. Mr. Kemp, a Republican, had initially signed the executive order following a string of shootings in Atlanta over the Fourth of July weekend that left 31 people injured and five dead.</p>

Mr. Kemp's move drew a rebuke from Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who has condemned the violence but said city officials didn't believe it was necessary to mobilize the National Guard.

"To me, it speaks to showmanship and this need to show that there are tanks on the streets of Atlanta," Ms. Bottoms said.

Ms. Bottoms also disputed the union's claims that there has been a withdrawal on the part of Atlanta police, stating instead that the recent bloodshed was the result of "a perfect storm of distress in America."

Academics attribute the increase to a confluence of factors, including high unemployment rates, [the easing of social distancing patterns](#) as states reopen, and a breakdown of trust between law enforcement and communities of color.

"People don't have jobs. They don't have a way to take care of their families," said Alyasah Sewell, an associate professor of sociology at Emory University and founder and director of the Race and Policing Project, which provides research on racial inequalities in the criminal justice system. "We have to think about what the pandemic actually did to our economy. And then to add insult to injury, you have the issue of police violence and police oppression. In some sense, it's a vicious cycle."

According to the Georgia Department of Labor, more than 2.9 million unemployment claims were processed in the first 14 weeks of the pandemic, representing more than the last seven years combined. Roughly 1.8 million of those claims were for residents of the metro Atlanta area. Georgia has about 10.6 million people, about 6 million of whom live in metro Atlanta.

Last month, Atlanta saw some of the largest protests in the country after the [May 25 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis](#) sparked national outrage. [Those demonstrations intensified](#) after the killing of Mr. Brooks, a 27-year-old Black man.

The former Atlanta police officer who fatally shot Mr. Brooks was swiftly [charged with felony murder](#) and 10 other offenses, while a second officer was charged with aggravated assault and violation of oath. Their attorneys have said the incident was an appropriate use of force because Mr. Brooks physically struggled with the officers and grabbed one of their Tasers.

The Wendy's where Mr. Brooks was shot and killed has in some ways served as a symbol of the turbulence gripping the city.

The fast-food restaurant, which was set on fire in the immediate aftermath of Mr. Brooks' death, [evolved into a center of activism](#). For weeks, protesters refused to leave the area while demanding police reform and hoping to transform the site into a memorial.

Things took a turn on the night of July 4, when 8-year-old Secoria Turner [was gunned down](#) after an armed group attempted to stop her family's car from entering a parking lot across the street from the Wendy's, according to authorities. A 19-year-old man, Julian Conley, was arrested last week and charged with the young girl's murder. His attorney said he was only a witness to the shooting. Police said they haven't identified a motive.

Activists said they had no connection to the gunmen involved, but the makeshift memorial was cleared out and the building was demolished last week.

"Enough is enough," Ms. Bottoms said at a July 6 press conference. "These aren't police officers shooting people on the streets of Atlanta, these are members of the community shooting each other."

She also emphasized in a conference call with reporters earlier this month that overall crime was down 30%, despite the rise in shootings. The Atlanta City Council moved ahead with several police reform measures earlier this month, including a ban on the use of chokeholds.

	<p>Some others said the emphasis on tensions with police ignored a socioeconomic divide that has been widened by the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on communities of color. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study of eight Georgia hospitals in April showing that in a sample of 305 coronavirus patients, more than 80% were Black. The state has seen an increase in new infections, with 140,000 cumulative cases and more than 3,000 dead, according to the Georgia Department of Public Health.</p> <p>“The precise population that is at the highest risk for coronavirus is also at the highest risk for violence,” said Thomas Abt, a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice, a think tank that conducts research on criminal justice and offers policy recommendations. “Poor people of color are getting hit hard by both epidemics. That strain can produce more conflict and more violence.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Paraguay: smugglers escalate violence
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/20/paraguay-violence-smugglers-coronavirus-border-closure
GIST	<p>Violence has escalated along the triple border between Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, as smugglers attempt to get round strict frontier controls imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus.</p> <p>One marine was killed in a fierce shootout between smugglers and the Paraguayan military last week, in an episode which then allegedly led to the detention and torture of 35 civilians.</p> <p>While Brazil and Argentina are struggling with surging coronavirus caseloads, Paraguay boasts some of the lowest rates of Covid-19 infection in Latin America – thanks in part to the fact that its borders have been closed since 24 March.</p> <p>But the lockdown has hit businesses in the country’s second city, Ciudad del Este – both legitimate and otherwise – which rely on Brazil for 90% of their sales.</p> <p>Smuggler groups – who move billions of dollars in drugs, cigarettes and electronic goods across the tri-border from Paraguay each year – have adapted to continue their trade despite pandemic restrictions.</p> <p>In addition to the more than 250 clandestine smuggling ports on the Paraná river, smugglers are reportedly using remote control speedboats and drones to take high-value goods over the river.</p> <p>Such tactics appear to be working. According to Brazilian police, drug confiscations in the border state of Paraná – almost all smuggled in from Paraguay – were up 500% in the first half of 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.</p> <p>The naval commander of Ciudad del Este said that Paraguayan border forces – as well as those of Brazil and Argentina – were seeing escalating violence and a strong presence of notorious Brazilian gangs such as Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) in the region.</p> <p>“The situation here has been getting more and more dangerous”, he told local press. “Every night in multiple locations ... we are being fired at”.</p> <p>However, Paraguay’s anti-contraband minister, Emilio Fúster, told local press that large-scale smuggling was largely enabled by official corruption.</p> <p>“There are agents who have become corrupted through the illegal trafficking of all types of different products,” he said.</p>

Return to Top	<p>On 16 July, tensions came to a head when a patrol boat from the Paraguayan navy was fired upon by suspected smugglers in what military sources have described as an ambush. One marine, was shot and later died.</p> <p>Following the gun battle, military personnel arrested 35 people, including several adolescents, from the poor riverside neighbourhood of San Miguel in Ciudad del Este, claiming that they had aided the smugglers.</p> <p>Witnesses said that arrests were made at gunpoint and that officials had entered homes without permits. CCTV video was circulated of men being beaten while they were forced into the back of a 4x4 vehicle. Photos and videos were subsequently circulated of deep wounds on many of the men's bodies. One man said that he had been tortured.</p> <p>"We all have marks from violence and torture," he said. "They poured hot water and alcohol on my head. A vein exploded inside."</p> <p>José Galeano of the Paraguayan National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture said the marines had clearly committed human rights violations.</p> <p>"They may have been affected by the loss of their colleague, but under absolutely no circumstances should this have happened," he said. "These men were flung about like bits of meat."</p> <p>Adm Carlos Velázquez, head of the Paraguayan navy, has called for an official investigation and suspended the local naval commander.</p>
-------------------------------	--

HEADLINE	07/20 US slaps sanctions Chechnya leader
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-slaps-strongman-ruler-russias-chechnya-sanctions-71879449
GIST	<p>MOSCOW -- The United States on Monday slapped sanctions on the regional strongman leader of Russia's republic of Chechnya over human rights violations including torture and extrajudicial killings.</p> <p>Ramzan Kadyrov, 43, has run Chechnya like his personal fiefdom, relying on his security forces to quash dissent. International human rights groups have accused Kadyrov and his lieutenants of abductions, torture and killings of their opponents.</p> <p>Rights defenders also hold the Chechen authorities responsible for a sweeping crackdown on gays over the past few years that has seen more than 100 people arrested, subjected to torture, with some of them killed. Chechen authorities have denied those accusations, and federal authorities said a probe found nothing to support the charges.</p> <p>In a statement announcing the sanctions, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pointed at "extensive credible information that Kadyrov is responsible for numerous gross violations of human rights dating back more than a decade, including torture and extrajudicial killings."</p> <p>Pompeo said the restrictions will apply to Kadyrov's wife and two daughters and he encouraged U.S. allies to take similar measures.</p> <p>Kadyrov responded on his blog, posting a picture of himself standing in a weapons storage room with a smile on his face and a machine gun in each hand.</p> <p>"Pompeo, we accept the fight. It's going to be even more fun down the road," he said.</p>

	<p>Russian lawmakers said that Moscow will find a way to reciprocate to the U.S. sanctions against Kadyrov, but wouldn't say what a possible response could be.</p> <p>The Kremlin has relied on Kadyrov to stabilize Chechnya after two separatist wars, providing generous federal subsidies and dismissing international criticism of his rule.</p> <p>The Kremlin also has stood by Kadyrov amid Russian opposition claims of his involvement in the 2015 killing of prominent Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov, which the Chechen leader has rejected. An officer in Chechnya's security forces was convicted of shooting Nemtsov on a bridge adjacent to the Kremlin and received a 20-year prison term.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Panama charges man in mass slaying
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/panama-charges-man-killing-youths-71887004
GIST	<p>Prosecutors in Panama said Monday they have brought murder charges against a man in the slaying of seven young people whose bodies were found near Lake Gatun, which forms part of the Panama Canal.</p> <p>Prosecutors did not provide details about the suspect, who was detained Sunday and is the only one arrested so far in the case. Investigators have said there is evidence other people may have been involved.</p> <p>The rare mass slaying of four men and three women has shocked Panama, in part because the victims were so young, aged 17 to 22.</p> <p>The victims were part of a group of 13 local youths who set out for a hike last Friday; six escaped and made their way home. Five of the bodies were found Saturday in an abandoned military bunker probably dating from the time of U.S. control of the waterway.</p> <p>Investigators said the bodies bore signs of bullet wounds. Prosecutor Adolfo Pineda said the survivors had provided information on the killings.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Mexico: homicides amid pandemic grew
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/murders-mexico-women-grew-pandemic-71882512
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- The number of homicides in Mexico has grown during the new coronavirus pandemic, including a 9.2% spike in killings of women, according to government figures released Monday.</p> <p>The data for the first half of 2020 showed homicides increased 1.9% to 17,982, as compared to 17,653 in the same period of 2019.</p> <p>Activists have long worried that the increased confinement of families to their homes would increase killings of women, and they indeed grew from 448 in the first half of 2019 to 489 in the same period of 2020.</p> <p>Some experts, meanwhile, had hoped the lockdown caused by the coronavirus would limit the drug gang activity that is a major cause of the violence, but on Monday the Defense Department released an analysis saying that a disturbing video of massed drug cartel gunmen posted online last week was indeed genuine and had received about 16 million views in a few days.</p> <p>The department said the video showed a column of about 75 Jalisco cartel gunmen dressed in military-style fatigues with a dozen homemade armored pickup trucks, an anti-aircraft gun, nine belt-fed machine guns, ten .50-caliber sniper rifles, six grenade launchers and 54 assault rifles.</p>

The department said the video showed “evidence of military-style training” and may have been timed to coincide with the July 17 birthday of Jalisco cartel leader Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera.

The department said the video was apparently filmed near the border of Jalisco and Guanajuato states and shows an “elite group” of cartel gunmen formed in 2019 who have been linked to an attack on police, but who have apparently not used the armored vehicles in combat or directly attacked federal forces.

Many of the trucks have welded steel-plate armor, turrets and firing slots. Some were painted with the Jalisco cartel's initials.

The army said “the armament, the equipment and the vehicles used show an unlimited use of money earned from illegal activities.” While other drug cartels have posted videos displaying their impressive firepower in the past, the army said the group shown in the Jalisco tapes “is the only group of this type.”

The department also suggested the Jalisco cartel may have been filmed that and another video “in response” to another drug gang leader's suggestion that he might call on the Sinaloa cartel for help in fighting Jalisco. Jalisco is fighting the Santa Rosa de Lima gang for control of the central state of Guanajuato.

In a video posted in June, José Antonio Yépez, the leader of the Santa Rosa gang, spoke about allying himself with the Sinaloa cartel to fight off the incursion by Jalisco. That proxy war has already made Guanajuato the deadliest state in Mexico. Guanajuato was where gunmen burst into a drug rehabilitation center in early July and killed at least 27 people. Those killings were not included in the figures released Monday.

Mexico security analyst Alejandro Hope wrote in a column in the El Universal newspaper Monday that cartels have displayed similar or larger shows of force in the past, and that the Jalisco force would probably avoid a direct confrontation with the Mexican military. But he said more rural patrols were needed to establish government control.

“The importance of the videos shouldn't be minimized, but it is also not unprecedented,” Hope wrote. “But the fact that these things occur time and time again shows the structural weakness of the Mexican government. That is what we should be talking about.”

The Public Safety Department noted in its report that the rate of growth in homicides has eased somewhat. But the continued high level of killings is likely to draw more attention to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's policy of avoiding direct confrontation with the cartels. He prefers to address social problems like poverty and unemployment that he says contribute to crime.

But López Obrador has given federal security forces — the Army, Navy and the newly created National Guard — so many duties outside of law enforcement that it would appear to leave them short-staffed to address the problem of warring drug cartels.

For example, about 50% of the 173,776 available non-administrative, non-support staff of the three federal forces are currently assigned to non-crime fighting duties, though several thousand more do perform drug eradication or other general patrolling efforts.

The non-military, non-security roles that federal forces play include transport and support for efforts to fight the pandemic, guarding pipelines, policing migrants and building infrastructure projects.

The effects of the lockdown on crime were varied and in some cases unclear. Officials reported a 12.1% increase in street-level drug-dealing cases during the first six months of the year, but it was unclear whether that was due to reduced street traffic during the pandemic, which would have made drug deals easier for police to detect.

	The pandemic did appear to have resulted in a steep drop in some types of crime. Because far fewer people are riding buses, robberies of passengers on public transportation dropped 45.1% during the first six months of the year, and kidnappings decreased by 37.3% compared to the same period of 2019. Other types of robberies were also down.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 Surge: threats to federal judges, families
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/murder-judge-esther-salas-son-highlights-surge-threats/story?id=71873951
GIST	<p>The murder of a New Jersey federal judge's son has put the spotlight on an alarming trend that officials say continues to rise: threats against federal judges and their families.</p> <p>The son of Judge Esther Salas, a freshman at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., was killed in the family's home in North Brunswick, New Jersey, on Sunday night and her husband was also shot multiple times and is in critical but stable condition, sources told ABC News. Salas was not injured and the suspect was later found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, sources said.</p> <p>Judge Salas, who is now under 24-hour protection, had received threats in the past and authorities are investigating whether there is any connection between those prior threats and the shooting, sources said.</p> <p>According to the U.S. Marshals Service, who are tasked with protecting federal judges, there were 4,449 threats and inappropriate communications against protected persons in 2019. In 2015, that number was 926.</p> <p>The U.S. Marshals Service says the increase is due to "improved effectiveness in data collection and reporting of potential threats."</p> <p>Over that same time period, the number of threats investigated rose from 305 in 2015 to 373 in 2019, peaking at 531 in 2018.</p> <p>A day after federal Judge James Robart issued a temporary restraining order on President Donald Trump's first travel ban on Feb. 3, 2017, threats against the judge came flooding in.</p> <p>According to the American Bar Association, before Robart left the Seattle, Washington, courthouse, his personal information was put out on the internet, along with his wife's information .</p> <p>After the president's tweets about Robart, the U.S. Marshals estimated that there were 1,100 serious threats against the judge, the ABA said.</p> <p>According to the U.S. Marshals, inappropriate communications or threats to protected court family members have also been on the rise.</p> <p>There were 4,542 reports of threats or inappropriate communications to family members in 2018. In 2014, that number was 768.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	07/20 'Anti-feminist' lawyer as NJ shooter; dead
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/federal-judges-son-shot-killed-husband-injured-attack/story?id=71871708
GIST	The suspect in the fatal shooting of a federal judge's son, who was an attorney that had a previous case in front of the judge, has been found dead, law enforcement sources told ABC News.

The son of Judge Esther Salas was shot and killed, and her husband shot and injured in an attack at the family's New Jersey home on Sunday night. Salas was not hurt in the attack.

Her son, Daniel Anderl, 20, died, Francis "Mac" Womack, the mayor of North Brunswick, New Jersey, told ABC News. Salas' husband, Mark Anderl, is in critical but stable condition as of Monday morning, according to law enforcement sources.

The suspect was a white man who wore a face covering and a FedEx uniform, law enforcement sources told ABC News, and he used an ordinary car to make a getaway.

The suspect has now been identified as Roy Den Hollander, a Manhattan lawyer and self-described antifeminist, multiple law enforcement sources briefed on the case told ABC News and the FBI confirmed.

Den Hollander's body was discovered in a car by a municipal employee in the town of Rockland, New York. He died of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound, the sources said. New York State Police were on scene and the FBI was called.

A FedEx package addressed to Judge Salas was discovered in the car, sources said. FedEx Spokesman Jim Masilak said in a statement, "We are aware of the media reports and are fully cooperating with investigating authorities."

At about 5 p.m. Sunday, the gunman knocked at the door to the family's North Brunswick home. Daniel Anderl answered the door and was shot first, before his father was also shot.

"He was shot through the heart," Womack said of Daniel Anderl, who was a student at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

"Daniel was a rising junior, enrolled for classes beginning in the next few weeks," Catholic University President John Garvey said in a statement Monday. "He turned 20 last week. We all mourn and grieve this loss to our University community."

Salas had received [threats](#) in the past, sources said. Authorities are investigating whether there is any connection between those prior threats and the shooting, or whether it possibly involved the husband's work as a criminal defense attorney.

"As a judge, she had threats from time to time, but everyone is saying that recently there had not been any," said Mayor Womack, who is personal friends with the judge and her husband.

In a 2015 case before Salas, Den Hollander represented a woman who wanted to register for the military draft. He was replaced last June as the woman's lawyer before the case was fully resolved. The court docket did not indicate a reason for his replacement and the woman's current attorney could not be reached.

Den Hollander had previously sued Manhattan nightclubs for favoring women by offering ladies' night discounts and sued the federal government over a law that protects women from violence. He has also sued Columbia University for offering women's studies courses, accusing the school of using government aid to teach a "religionist belief system called feminism."

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy called the shooting "a brazen and cowardly act of gun violence at their home in North Brunswick. We give our full support to Judge Salas and her husband at this most trying time. This is an unconscionable tragedy."

The New Jersey State Police, the North Brunswick Police and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's office are also involved in the investigation. The U.S. Marshals have been called to provide the judge with a security detail, according to a law enforcement official.

	<p>"I know Judge Salas and her husband well, and was proud to recommend her to President Obama for nomination to New Jersey's federal bench," New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez said in a statement. "My prayers are with Judge Salas and her family, and that those responsible for this horrendous act are swiftly apprehended and brought to justice."</p> <p>U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr also offered his condolences to Salas and her family.</p> <p>"This kind of lawless, evil action carried out against a member of the federal judiciary will not be tolerated, and I have ordered the full resources of the FBI and U.S. Marshals Service to investigate the matter," Barr said in a statement.</p> <p>Salas is the first Latina woman to serve on the federal bench in New Jersey.</p>
Return to Top	

Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to intake@wsfc.wa.gov and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

DISCLAIMER - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

FAIR USE Notice All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)